

# HASIDISM

BY  
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## Foreword

**T**HIS BOOK has arisen out of work stretching over a period of more than forty years.

More than forty years ago I began to become acquainted with the writings of a great religious movement, Hasidism, of which as a boy through half-degenerate offshoots I had obtained a fleeting impression without realising what it meant, or what it might one day mean for my own way of life. Since then I have been striving towards an understanding of its truth, towards an understanding of that within it which has disclosed itself to me as truth. In this book the essential features of the results of this work are shown. I consider Hasidic truth vitally important for Jews, Christians, and others, and at this particular hour more important than ever before. For now is the hour, when we are in danger of forgetting for what purpose we are on earth, and I know of no other teaching that reminds us of this so forcibly.

Hasidism has never set foot in the world of man as Christianity has done. Because of its truth, and because of the need of the hour, I carry it into the world against its will.

The chapters "Spinoza, Sabbatai Zevi and the Baalshem," "Spirit and Body of the Hasidic Movement," and "Symbolical and Sacramental Existence in Judaism" were first published in German, the rest in Hebrew.

Jerusalem

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# HASIDISM



# The Beginnings of Hasidism

## I

THE APPEARANCE of Hasidism within the history of faith of Judaism and its importance for the general history of religion cannot be understood on the basis of its teaching as such. Regarded by itself the hasidic teaching offers no new spiritual elements, it presents only a selection, which it has taken partly from the later Kabbalah, and partly from popular traditions among the people. It is true that these spiritual elements have been worked out anew, formulated anew, shaped into a new unity; but also the point of reference which determined this selection is not a theoretical one. The decisive factor for the nature and greatness of Hasidism is not found in a teaching, but in a mode of life; and, indeed, in a mode of life which shapes a community, and regulates a community in accordance with its own character. Here the relationship between the teaching and the mode of life does not at all belong to the type in which a mode of life may be regarded as a carrying out of a teaching; it functions much more in the opposite direction. It is the new mode of life which presses towards a conceptual expression, a theological interpretation; and the practical point of reference, which determines the selection, has its origin in this need for theological interpretation. It is also

this relationship which accounts for the fact that the founder of hasidic theology, Rabbi Baer of Meseritch, hardly ever called the Baal-shem, the founder of the hasidic movement, his teacher, although, as Baer himself recounts, Baal-shem had taught him secrets and "unifications," the language of the birds, and the writing of the angels; the Baal-shem had no new *theologoumena* to communicate to him, but a living relationship with this world and the upper world. The Baalshem himself belongs to those central figures in the history of religion who have done their work by living in a certain way, that is to say, not starting out from a teaching but aiming towards a teaching, who have lived in such a way that their life acted as a teaching, as a teaching not yet translated into words. The life of such people stands in need of a theological commentary; their own words form a contribution towards this, but often it is only a very fragmentary contribution; sometimes their words can be used only as a kind of introduction, for according to their original purpose these words are not interpretations but expressions of their speakers' lives. In the words of the Baal-shem which we know (as far as we can regard them as correctly handed down) the importance is not found in their objective content, which can be separated off from them, but in their characteristic pointing to a life. Two different things must be added to this. Firstly the nature of this life is given by the wholly personal mode of faith, and nevertheless this faith acts in such a way as to form a community. Let it be noted: it does not form a fraternity, it does not form a separate order, which guards an esoteric teaching, apart from public life; it forms a community, it forms a community of people; these people continue living their life within their family, rank,



public activity, some of them being bound more closely, others more loosely, to the master; but all these people imprint on their own, free, public life the system of life which they have received by association with the master. The determining factor in the whole of this process is that the master does not live alone by himself, or lead a secluded life with a group of disciples, but that he lives in the world and with the world. It is just this living in the world and with the world which belongs to the innermost core of his mode of faith. Secondly, there arises a circle of people within the community, who lead the same kind of life, some of whom have reached a similar mode of life independently of the master, but who, through him, have received the decisive stimulation, the decisive moulding, people in different stages, of very different natures, but all endowed with just the one common, basic trend to carry the teaching on by their lives, until everything they say is but a marginal gloss on it. Each life is a life in itself, for its part forming the community; and it is a life in the world and with the world, and a life which for its part again gives birth, in spirit, to people of the same kind. The flowering period of the hasidic movement lasted as long as both agencies remained active, as long as the forming of communities and the spiritual procreation of disciples who form communities continued, that is, as long as segregation gained no entry, and tradition was not rent asunder; it lasted for about five generations from the Baal-shem. The communities were not by any means communities of human paragons, nor were their leaders the kind of men who would be called saints in Christianity or Buddhism, but the communities were communities, and the leaders were leaders. The "Zaddikim" of these five genera-

tions offer us a number of religious personalities of a vitality, a spiritual strength, a manifold originality such as have never, to my knowledge, appeared together in so short a time-span in the history of religion. But the most important thing about these zaddikim is that each of them was surrounded by a community that lived a brotherly life, and who could live in this way because there was a leading person in their midst who brought each one nearer to the other by bringing them all nearer to that in which they believed. In a century which was, apart from this, not very productive religiously obscure Polish and Ukrainian Jewry produced the greatest phenomenon we know in the history of the spirit, something which is greater than any solitary genius in art or in the world of thought, a society which lives by its faith.

Because this is so, because Hasidism in the first instance does not signify a category of teaching, but one of living, its legend is our main source for understanding it, and its theoretical literature comes only after its legend. The theoretical literature is the gloss, the legend is the text, and that in spite of the fact that it is a legend which has been handed down in a state of extreme corruption, and which it is impossible to recover in its purity. It would be foolish to object that legend cannot transmit the reality of hasidic life. It is obvious that legend is not chronicle; however, to him who knows how to read the legend, it conveys more truth than the chronicle. It is indeed not possible to reconstruct from it the factual course of events, but, in spite of its corruption, it is possible to perceive in it the life-element in which the events have consummated themselves, by which they were received and told with naive enthusiasm, and told till they

became legend. Apart from secondary, literary elaborations, which betray themselves as such at first glance, no arbitrariness is felt in these tales. Those who told them were impelled by an inner constraint, the nature of which is the hasidic life, the pulsating hasidic relationship of leader and community. Even the most daring miracle-stories are not usually the product of mere invention. The zaddik had done what had never been heard of before, with unheard-of power he had laid his spell over the souls of men, they experienced his work as a miracle, they could but tell of it in the language of miracle. It used to be common further to refer to the fact that many of these tales are of much older origin; much of what is told of the masters of the Talmud, we find here again recounted as the acts of zaddikim. But even this grossly unhistorical attitude has its share of truth. The naive mind that experienced the beatific present weaved into it the tradition of the past that was in tune with the present—any thought of forgery was far from the minds of these storytellers, for, after all, the old stories were mostly known to every one. What happened must rather be conceived of as the spontaneous rise of the report that the Rabbi had done anew this or that well-known deed; he acted in such and such a way, not in order to imitate the first doer, but entirely naturally, because there are certain basic forms of good works. How, for instance, could the irrepressible eagerness to help the helpless find a more direct expression than by the Rabbi coming late to communal prayer, because he had to stop on his way to quiet a weeping child? Or how could the inner freedom with regard to possessions be more radically expressed than by the Rabbi declaring all that he owns to be ownerless before he goes to bed at night, so that the

burden of sin may remain far from the thieves who might enter in? However, most often one finds that something new and characteristic has come into the stories in the retelling of them. What had been handed down was, according to its very nature, an example of the *individual* life. In the atmosphere of the *community* life it became something different.

## II

It is only when one recalls how the sabbatian catastrophe worked itself out in the Jewry of Poland and the Ukraine that one can understand the rise of the new principle of life. Hence a quarter of a century after Sabbatai Zwi's death the hope, hemmed in yet ever swelling in spite of the great disillusionment, led to its most powerful eruption, when the host of penitents led by Yehuda Hasid set out on their wanderings to Palestine, wanderings almost reminiscent of certain side-effects called forth by the crusades. It was in this part of Jewry that the Sabbatian disintegration of the teaching, which rightly has been called a religious nihilism, sent forth its extreme consequence in the form of the sect of Frank, indeed the strangest formation of the spiritual life in modern history. It was also in this part of Jewry that its counter-movement arose in Hasidism. By "counter-movement" I do not understand a movement which carries on an external fight against an outward appearance, but rather a counter-force, which arises out of the depth of the capacity of the organic community-life to build new community-cells, different in kind from the old ones, standing firm against the disintegration of the old cells and the disintegration with

which this process threatens the organism; I mean the re-birth of a healthy capacity to believe on the part of a people lying fatally sick in a perversion of its faith. From this it is easily seen to follow that the counter-movement cannot by its very nature be a reformation; it cannot be a desire for a return to an earlier condition that had no problems, to the condition which prevailed before the illness supervened. The counter-movement takes for its beginning the conflict of elements as it exists in the present, and then it distils the antidote from the very same material as the inner poison used for its own brew. It is not without significance in this connection that the decisive development of Hasidism did not occur after the movement of Frank, but simultaneously with it.

We owe to the work of Gershom Scholem that knowledge and understanding of the sabbatian theology which now make it possible for us to grasp the dialectic of the post-sabbatian, spiritual history in its movement and counter-movement. We knew the uncanny, historical fact of Sab-batai Zwi, the appearance of this messianic pretender whom the masses received with a jubilant "yes" after all the "no's" that generations of men waiting for the Messiah had given to all his predecessors; we knew of him, how he then, crowned and worshipped as the holy King, left Judaism. But now we also know the still more uncanny theology that was familiar with all the artifices with which gnosticism perverts the scale of values, and which used them to re-interpret the meaning of the event till it became its opposite: the conception of the Messiah as he who must enter completely into the "Klipah," the daemonic power of the shells, that he may liberate the holiness there held fast, and who in doing thus

fulfils the purpose of the exile of Israel, and redeems Israel and the world in one. But even that is not enough. The holy sin becomes a pattern, men must hurl themselves into sin in order to tear from it the holy sparks; and soon there is no sin any longer, with the fulfilment of the meaning of the new, messianic aeon the yoke of the old Torah has been broken; it was only valid for the unredeemed world, and now the new revelation has come; the revelation which allows all and sanctifies all is here.

It is obvious that the sabbatian theology is the climax of the process which began in kabbalistic eschatology, where Messianism was being made an alien thing through its being impregnated with gnosis. In the faith of the prophets the Messiah was the perfect man, who came forth from Israel, and who, as God's vicegerent, did the work that had been reserved for man to do. We find as late as in a Jewish-Christian gospel the conception of a God who "in all the prophets" "expects" him who shall come. It is in this dramatic confrontation of God and man that the faith of Israel is rooted, and it is this confrontation which first in the apocalyptic literature and then later in the Kabbalah becomes more and more obliterated; divine emanations mediate between heaven and earth, it is one of these who descends to the world of men as the Messiah, and finally Sabbatai Zwi is prayed to as "the true God and King of the World." It is only logically consistent that he, like the gnostic Christ, journeys to the hell of this world, and makes himself like unto its rulers in order to lead them captive. But though it was from the later Kabbalah that the Sabbatian theology took its conception of the holy sparks which are to be drawn forth from out of the uncleanness, the conception itself is

in the last resort not of syncretistic but of Jewish origin. That the togetherness of man with God, with God who "dwells with them in the midst of their uncleanness," purifies and hallows all; that man must serve God with the evil impulse too; that the redemption overcomes the division between clean and unclean, holy and profane; that *all* becomes pure and holy—this we must regard as an autochthonous possession of the Jewish faith. The ingredients for the antidote are prepared.

The Sabbatian theology anticipated the redeemed world; it declared for present use the draft on a reality which is to come into being only in a perfection of the world which is still beyond ken. In doing this it undermined the Torah, and deprived it of its living substance, for the Torah is only firm and vital so long as man is shown a way as the way of God; to guide a man on his way means to give him guidance for an existence which is within his ken, and it always implies exclusion of all that which is not the way for him. It is only within the context of the messianic expectation and preparation that one can rightly lay hold of the fact that in a world of perfection *all* becomes the way; when one treats it as an accomplished fact, and is at the same time surrounded by the facts of an unredeemed world, facts that are mightier than all theology, then one has really taken one's stand on zero, on *nihil*, and is soon done for, if one remains honest. But from this point a two-fold possibility reveals itself. The one can be accomplished by the perfect lie, with juggling gestures it moves in the tintinnabulum of nothing as if it were something. The other is possible for him who stakes something, namely, a new mode of life. Both Jacob Frank and the Baal-shem start with the post-sabbatian situa-

tion, behind which it is not possible to go. The one dashes the undermined Torah to pieces, the other fills it with life.

### III

When I say "the perfect lie," I do not by any means wish to imply that one can understand Jacob Frank, if one takes him to be an impostor, for that would be a misleading simplification. By "lie" I do not here mean something which the human being does or says, but rather what he is. This man is not a liar, he is a lie. This means, therefore, that he does believe in himself, but after the manner of the lie, as the lie believes in itself—for the lie also has a method by which it believes in itself. It is obvious that Sabbatai believed in something absolute, and that he believed in himself in relation to it; his "messianic consciousness" was based on this. It is not the belief as such, but the belief in himself, which does not stand firm; when later a compromise between both modes of belief is set up, nothing is altered in the fact that the ring has snapped in the decisive moment: Sabbatai has not decided to pay for the possibility of miracle with the possibility of martyrdom. Frank, who did not grow up in an atmosphere of ascetic longing for redemption, as Sabbatai did, but in an atmosphere of libertine marrano environment, cannot in any way fall like Sabbatai, because he never stood like Sabbatai; his public activity does not end with his secession, it rather begins with it. Frank does not believe in something absolute and in himself in relation to it, he believes in nothing, he is not even capable of really believing in himself, he can only believe in himself after the manner of the lie by filling the space of the nothing with



himself. True, for appearance's sake he populates the nothing with divine forms, the spawn of late-gnostic phantasy, like the Three who lead the world, and the hidden "Big Brother" who is unknown even to them. It is, however, evident that he only plays with this world of mythology; in reality he holds to nothing but to himself, and he is capable of holding to himself by himself without having any foothold. Therefore he has nothing which can restrain him any longer, and his freedom from all restraint acts like a magic with which he works on people, on those people whom he wants to affect. When one deals with Frank, the question does not arise whether he was mentally ill or healthy; he possesses real delusion, the delusion that makes for complete lack of restraint; he utilises, however, this real delusion for working magically on human beings—and he utilises his magical, compelling effect on them not merely for his ephemeral purposes, he comes to use it more and more, because the nihilistic belief in himself must draw its nourishment from the beliefs of others, when it is threatened by the crisis of self-reflection, or else it would cease to exist. When to win back his waning power Frank sends word to his adherents in Poland from the town of Offenbach that Jacob, the true and living God, lives and will live for ever, then this craving for being believed so that he himself may believe has been raised to its highest potentiality. As Israel's messianism was done away with in Sabbatianism, so here the Sabbatian, emanational messianism does away with itself: neither God nor his emanation exists any longer, there is left only the human person who fills the nothing. But if the human being who conceives of himself as this person is to continue to do so, he must unceasingly absorb into himself

the warm flesh and blood of belief of others in him. The group of disciples that gather round him, and allow themselves to be thus absorbed by him, with their orgies and raptures, form the daemonic community of the daemonic Messiah; in the midst of the Christian Church they advertise the decay of the community of Israel. The sabbatian torrent had overwhelmed the strong life of the Jewish community, and from the flood there emerges its caricature, the anti-community. This crowd is without any restraints, and yet, at the same time, it is utterly tied to a leader who leads it into nothing; thus it affords an unsurpassable spectacle of disintegration.

#### IV

Just like Frankism so Hasidism starts from the situation which was created by the Sabbatian disaster, but, unlike Frankism, Hasidism does not do so in order to go further. There is no going further unless it be to corruption and decay. Hasidism recognises the disaster which has happened as a disaster, not only as a disaster within the nation and belonging to the inner world, but as a disaster in the relationship between God and Israel, between God and man. The relation between deity and mankind has suffered a grave injury, the apparently intimate nearness between them has revealed itself to be misuse; what appeared as mandate ended in treachery. The injury done to the relationship between the upper and lower worlds continues to increase, the lie becomes mighty, and poses as the new truth. It threatens not only to enmesh the utterly bewildered and unsteady Jewry in delusion and guilt; it threatens to undermine not

only the inner and outer structure of Jewry, but it threatens to create a breach between it and God, a deeper fissure than any that has ever been. It is at this point that the new element takes hold in the form of the mode of life of the Baalshem and of those who belong to him. The question is no longer that of the healing of the people, but a question of healing the broken relationship between heaven and earth. The evil must be checked, before it becomes invincible. And that cannot be done by fighting; it can only be effected through new mediation and new guidance.

It is no accident that the new movement arose in Podolia. From the days of Sabbatai Zwi till the time of the birth of the Baalshem, Podolia had belonged to Turkey, and it was Turkish Jewry that had been specially exposed to the problems of the post-Sabbatian period; it was also here that Frank had first gained a foothold. Baalshem is to be understood against the background of this people who had been shaken by the feverish character of the two movements, and who were still shivering in the ague of its deepest night. The solitude in which the Baalshem spent his youth amidst the stillness of the Carpathian mountains symbolises the gathering strength to withstand the seduction. When he came forth, it was to work for the healing of body and soul. A story, which is characteristic of this is given in the legend which tells of how he won the Maggid of Mezritch, the man who was destined to complete his teaching. First the Baalshem helps the Maggid to conquer a physical illness; next he shows him that his knowledge is no knowledge, and then follows a manifestation which comes upon the recipient as a vision-like event, and shakes his innermost soul. The Baalshem's real work is this winning of

people for a new mode of life, it is the building up of a community of people who both rejoice in the world and are orientated towards the nearness of God, a community that is scattered throughout the country, and which yet, nevertheless, forms a circle round him. During the latter part of his life, and after his death, it was this work which stood out over against the goings-on of Frank's adherents. It is said that the Baalshem took part in the rabbinical disputations against the sect; this, however, is not only historically false, but also untrue to his nature. His true attitude is shown by the following story. Once, on the eve of the Day of Atonement, he was so overwhelmed by the thought of the danger that threatened Israel in that it might lose its organic connection with tradition together with the Oral Torah that he had to break off in the middle of the blessing of the community; he threw himself down before the Ark, and accused the rabbis of not having rightly guarded the wealth entrusted to them; during the final prayer on the following day he was raised to the gate of heaven, and there he found the prayers that had failed to gain entrance into heaven during the last fifty years; he went and sought out the Messiah, and with his help he succeeded in gaining an entrance together with the prayers, and the impending fate was averted amidst the rejoicing of heaven. The important point in this story is that the prayers of the last fifty years had to wait on earth, until they were raised up to the gate of heaven on this Day of Atonement by the powerful prayers of the community of the Baalshem. From this it follows that the prayers of the rabbinic community could not mount to heaven by themselves during the Sabbatian period, and had to be raised up by the new movement. It was in fact

not only against the movement of Frank that the Baalshem took a stand by his life and teaching, but also against the rabbinism of the time; he accuses the latter of divorcing the Torah from real life and thus removing the people from the nearness of God; in doing so rabbinism prepared the people for accepting the false message of God's nearness. The Baalshem died soon after the mass-baptism of Frank's adherents. It is told how shortly before his death he grieved over "the severed members of the Shekhinah." Legend has it that he had to die in consequence of the venture in which he took heaven by storm.

We shall, however, understand the relation between the Baalshem and Sabbatianism still better, if we consider the allusions in the story of the temptation that came close to him from that quarter. The story is told in a strangely reticent way, and it is obvious that it keeps silent about much of importance; it recounts how Sabbatai Zwi once appeared to the Baalshem to ask him for redemption. In order to effect this kind of redemption it is necessary to bind all the elements of one's own nature to those of the dead person, as Elisha brought all of his into contact with those of the dead boy; it is necessary to join each of the three elements of one's own soul—the breath of life, the spirit, the soul itself—to those of the person who needs redemption. The Baalshem wanted to fulfil the request; however, as he feared the influence of so intimate a contact with what is evil, he was circumspect, when he began the work, and decided not to do it all at once, but to spread it over a period of time. During this time Sabbatai appeared to him once while he was asleep, and, obviously relying on the intimacy that had been established between them, he tried to tempt the

Baalshem. The account does not say to what he tried to tempt him, but it is not difficult to fill in the suppressed point: the false Messiah wanted to tempt the Baalshem to regard himself as the Messiah and to proclaim himself as such. The Baalshem, however, withstood him, and hurled him away with such force that he tumbled headlong down to the bottom of the nether world. Afterwards the Baalshem used to say of him that there had been a holy spark in him, but that Satan had caught him in his coil, the coil of pride. In connection with this story one should also remember that the Baalshem used to say that when one stretches one's feet out before drawing the last breath, one must not have any self-contentment, and that, according to tradition, he was heard whispering softly to himself before his death this verse from the Psalm: "Let not the foot of pride come near me."

When Spengler, the well-known philosopher of history, saw in the Baalshem a type of Messiah, he did so by referring to my work. But this view of the Baalshem is at variance both with his self-consciousness and with his whole mode of life. There is nothing eschatological about him, there is nothing which voices any claim to be final and determining. Legend represents the Baalshem as experiencing in diverse events the fact that his hour is not the hour of redemption, but the hour of renewal; but these stories too never tell of him as behaving as the one who fulfils; he is represented only as trying to help in the redemption, to prepare for it, and even this he does in vain. Once legend gives an indication that when the Messiah comes, then he will prove to be him, the returning Israel ben Eliezer. But in this present life his nature is different, and his task is different. Everything in him and about him is against "the hurrying of the

End," which has degenerated into delusion and lie, and which has brought man's relationship with God into extreme danger by a frenzied devotion to unreal gods. Everything points to the necessity of returning to a beginning, to the beginning of a real life for the real God in the real world.

## V

It is usual to take the so-called Zaddikism to be a later degeneration within Hasidism. But what one calls Zaddikism is only the exaggeration of an element which manifested itself already in the earliest stages of Hasidism, and which cannot be isolated from its fundamental life and teaching.

Hasidism found the conception of the zaddik lying ready to its hand both in Kabbalistic literature and in popular tradition; but Hasidism filled this conception with new meaning. Both in literature and in tradition the zaddik was taken to be a man who was connected with God in a special way, and who therefore not only saw into His mysteries, but also acted with full power committed to him. In Hasidism the zaddik becomes also the man who leads the community in God's stead, and who mediates between God and the community. In this context community is always taken to mean both the special, well-defined community that is gathered round an individual zaddik, and the community of all Israel. The latter manifests itself in the former, the individual community is the whole people. This development in the conception of the zaddik by which the special position of one man becomes an institution can again only be understood against the background of the crisis. The more acute the crisis became, the more intense became the quest for new

leadership. In spite of various energetic sallies the old rabbinic leadership had not been able to overcome the crisis, for it fought only to maintain the teaching, and not for a renewal of life. Already from the start of the hasidic movement hasidic circles had regarded the rabbinic leadership much in the same way as a nation regards a government which has failed to prepare defences against an enemy invasion, and therefore cannot offer resistance when the invasion comes; a counter-government has to be established. By the nature of the case this meant that in the hasidic form of his position, the zaddik could not any longer be primarily a scholar. It is true that the founders of the hasidic movement were very eager to draw outstanding talmudic scholars into their circle; but each of them was subjected to a searching criticism of his former mode of life, which, together with his induction to the different mode of life, resulted in an inner change, which was so great that all that had hitherto formed the centre of his existence now became peripheral, while the new service formed the centre of his new life. A good example of this is afforded by the legend of Baer of Mezritch in the house of the Baalshem. This new service is one of the strongest fusions of communion with God and communion with man known in the history of religion. Man serves God by helping God's creation, man helps God's creation by leading it to God, a leading which does not turn its back on life, but walks through the middle of life itself. It was an education for leadership to be a disciple in the house of the founders of the movement.

The Sabbatian revolution had stirred the Polish Jew in the innermost core of his being, its end had shaken the very foundations of all that was his world, and now he asked



passionately for leadership, he craved for a man who would take him under his wings, give certainty to his bewildered soul, order and form to an existence which had become chaotic, and who would, above all, enable him again both to believe and to live. The hasidic movement educated such leaders. Rabbis who only imparted information of how to practise the precepts of the Law did not suffice for the new demands, and sermons on the meaning of the teaching were of no use. In a world in which one could not any longer muster the necessary strength for reflection and decision, one needed a man who could show one what to believe, and who could tell one what to do. When we consider the unconditioned self-surrender of the Frankists to Frank, we can see how completely people let themselves be absorbed by a man who was prepared to shoulder all responsibility for them. The hasidic movement had to start from this. It had to produce men who would lift on to their strong shoulders all those who wanted to be carried, and who would also set them down on the ground again as soon as they could be trusted to walk by themselves. In complete contrast to the pseudo-messianic types the hasidic leaders undertook responsibility for the souls entrusted to them, while at the same time they kept alive in them the spark of responsibility. While Frank wanted people to take him to be the fulfilment that superseded the Torah, the highest praise one could give a zaddik was to say that he was a Torah, by which one meant that the side of the Torah which cannot be expressed in words, but which yet can be handed on through human existence, manifested itself in his nature, in his everyday behaviour, in his unemphatic, involuntary, unintentional acts and attitudes, in "how he fastens and loosens his sandals."

These men mediated between God and man, but at the same time they insisted on the importance of the immediate relationship to God, which cannot be replaced by any mediation.

A further, important characteristic of hasidic Zaddikism lies in the plurality of the zaddikim. The messianic pretender is by his very nature one single person; zaddikhood must, by its very nature, present itself in a number of contemporaneous men, to each of whom the various parts of the community may be said to be allocated. According to a saying ascribed to the Baalshem there are thirty-six manifest as well as thirty-six hidden zaddikim. In spite of all exaggeration no zaddik considers himself to be the only one; in spite of all strife between this and that community, and all jealousy between their respective teachers and disciples, this allocation remains valid and unshaken. It is true that sometimes the hasidim believe and say that apart from their rabbi there is no other in the world; but the fundamental opinion of the earlier hasidism is given by the zaddik who calls such behaviour a service to false gods. "How then should one speak?" he asks, and answers, "One should say, 'Our rabbi is the best rabbi for our needs!'" In other words, each zaddik and his community are predestined for each other.

"I have come to help the whole world," said Frank. The zaddik has to help his hasidim. But in order truly to help them, in order to bring them to God, not merely with a part of their life, such as with their thoughts, or with their feeling, but really to bring them to God with their whole life, it is necessary for him to comprehend their whole life, from the concern for their daily bread to the concern

for the cleansing of their souls. It is not that he was to do something for them, but everything. And because it is his duty to do everything, he must be able to do everything. "Why," it is asked jokingly, "does one call the zaddik 'the good Jew?' If one wanted to say that he prays well, then one would have to call him 'the good prayerful man'; if one wanted to say that he learns well, then 'the good learner.' 'A good Jew' is good in his thinking, good in his drinking, good in his eating, good in his work, good in his intentions, and good in everything."

The legend of the Baalshem allegorises the organic connection between the zaddik and his community by making him dance with his hasidim, or by telling how when he spoke in their congregation each single one of them felt his speech as directed to him, and found in it advice for his own individual life. But we find already in the first hasidic book, which was based on sayings of the Baalshem, an elaborate definition of this organic connection. The mutuality of the bond is emphasised in this book in the strongest possible way. It is true that the community by itself is like the earth before it was joined with heaven, a chaos; but "the zaddikim must not say that they do not need the people," the people are like the bearers of the Ark of the Covenant without whom it cannot move, even though in the innermost reality it is the Ark that carries the bearers. On the other hand a sharp criticism is directed against the conditions as they existed before the hasidic movement began, and as they continued to exist side by side with the movement, where the learned on one side and the people on the other side represented two widely separated ends, which did not enter into any relationship with each other; the learned must become

aware of their own shortcomings and take part in the life of the people, for only thus can they also lift up the masses.

## VI

But this advice should not be taken to imply that hasidism regards "the simple man" as having only a passive, receptive function. On the contrary, according to hasidic views it is just with him that one can find an element of the highest active importance.

Here also we do best by starting from Frankism. Jacob Frank emphasised again and again to his adherents that he was an *am ha-aretz*, an ignorant man. "God has chosen me," he said, "because I am an *am ha-aretz*." That which is at stake is not given to the wise and the learned, but only to "such ignorant men as myself, for the wise look towards heaven, although they do not see anything there, we, however, should look on the earth." In a beautiful simile, which among all his sayings is the one which comes nearest to the hasidic parables, he tells of the perfect pearl, which none of the masters could pierce, because none dared to do so, for each of them knew how easily he might splinter it in the process; a journeyman, who did not know the danger, undertook to pierce the pearl in the absence of his master, and he succeeded.

The decisive difference between the world of Frank and that of the Baal-shem reveals itself, however, exactly at the point where they apparently come nearest to each other. Frank boasts of his ignorance, because it makes him free from all restraint. He is not bound by any knowledge of the Torah, he ignores the full divine burden of human re-

sponsibility; it is therefore that his hand does not falter, when he pierces the pearl of the human world. He is chosen, it is not necessary for him to question the truth of what he is to do and what not to do, it is not necessary for him to decide, everything is decided. "I have been chosen," he says, "because I am an *am ha-aretz*, and as such I shall with God's help pierce everything and bring it to everything." Later on he says no longer "with God's help." He himself is "that burning thornbush."

The simple man, whom the hasidic teaching praises, has not a particle of self-consciousness. He would consider himself ridiculed if told that he was chosen. He too has no need to decide, for he lives his life quite simply, without any subtle enquiries; he accepts the world as it is, and wherever the opportunity comes to him, he does the good which is entrusted to him with an undaunted soul, as if he had known it from all eternity; if, however, he once should go astray, then he seeks with all his might for a way out, and casts his lot on God. It is God he cares for, He is his great Lord and Friend; as Lord and Friend he addresses Him continuously, he tells Him everything, as if God knew nothing of it; he is not embarrassed in His presence. He can neither learn nor pray "rightly," that is, use *kavanot*, the secret intentions. But he does his daily work eagerly, and as he does it, he says the Psalms which he knows by heart; they too are a way of speaking to God, and he is sure that his speech will be heard. And sometimes he feels particularly glad in his heart, and then he whistles in God's honour, or dances and even jumps, as he cannot show Him his love in any other way. And God rejoices over it. He rejoices over him. This hasidic God knows how to rejoice, as his hasidim know

how to rejoice. But still more: according to legend it sometimes happens that such a man who "does not know how to pray" once opens his heart to God with all his might in the middle of the prayer of the community, and with the strength of his prayer he carries up all weak and maimed prayers that have no wings to rise. He, too, has the power to unite.

It is told of one of the zaddikim, a man who was outstanding for his patient suffering, his prayer, and his love of music, Rabbi Israel of Kosnitz, that he specially liked the "simple people" to come to him; when his disciples asked him why, he said to them: "As for me—all my travail and work are aimed at making myself simple, and they are already simple."

And just because "the simple man" is so important, there cannot be any esoteric Hasidism, in contrast to the Kabbalah, so long as the movement retains its original strength and purity. There is no shutting up of the mysteries; everything is fundamentally open to all, and everything is again and again repeated so simply and concretely that each true believer can grasp it. Attention has rightly been drawn to the impetus which the hasidic movement received from its recognition of the formerly despised *am ha-aretz* as a member with equal religious rights in the community, and from its admiration for the simple believing man. One must, however, add to this that from its beginning the movement was supported in the wider circles of the community by a new generation, yea by a new type of man, and that this type of man would not have anything more to do with the "hurrying of the End," which was so fateful in its consequences, but that he undertook to serve God with the strength given him in each hour of his life. It must further

be added that it was this type of man which the movement strove to heighten in the eyes of the people, and in doing so it attempted to enlarge the new spiritual authority of the zaddik by establishing a religious élite that arose from the masses themselves.

## VII

Frank had based the glorification of his own ignorance on the grounds that the earlier way, the way of knowledge of precepts and the teachings of faith, had now been supplanted by a new way, "which never yet, since the beginning of the world, had occurred to one human being." The old words are "long dead," the precepts must be "splintered like a fragment of pottery," everything that preceded must fall, before the new structure is erected for eternity. "The Christ which is known to you has said that he has come to deliver the world from out of the hands of Satan, but I have come to deliver it from all the precepts and ordinances which have existed hitherto. I must abrogate it all, and then the Good God will reveal himself" (that is, in accordance with the current gnostic conception, the hidden God, who is not identical with the creator and ruler of the world). For this reason he demands of his adherents that they shall "wash themselves clean of all laws," as "the highpriest washed himself clean, before he entered the Holy of Holies"; they must doff all the laws and doctrines that cling to them, and follow him step by step. And once he gives utterance to the statement, "All leaders must be without religion." The statement reminds one of the conviction which, according to reports, was entertained by the holder of the

highest grade within the sect of Assassins, and which according to recently published reports, also must be regarded as the real creed of the world-historical Assassinism of our day.

Hasidism starts on this point too from the situation as it is given by the crisis, and does not attempt to go behind it. The Sabbatian anti-nomism had questioned the position of the Torah as law in its customary sense, that is as a sum of God's commandments, which had no other purpose than to allow men to fulfil His inscrutable will. The hasidic movement cannot aim at re-instating the Torah conceived in this way. It can and will only preserve the Torah by substituting a floating boundary for the clear-cut frontier-line drawn between the spheres of the permissible and the forbidden things on the one hand, and the indifferent things, the "adiaphora" on the other hand. The hasidic conception of the Torah is a further development of the traditional belief that God wishes to use man in the conquest of the world which he has created. God wills to make it truly into his own world, his own dominion, but only through the act of man. The intention of the divine revelation is to form men who can work for the redemption of the world. By this is not meant one single, messianic act, but the deeds of the everyday, which prepare for the messianic fulfilment. A harmony of all functions is here substituted for the eschatological fever of the crisis, and this harmony does not simply mean health, it means rather healing. The "mizvoth," the commandments, mark the sphere of the things which are already expressly given over to man for hallowing. Hasidism developed the late kabbalistic teaching of the divine sparks that have fallen into things and which can be "lifted up" by man. For such a lifting up the mizvoth are recommended



to man. He who does a mizvah with complete kavanah, that is, performs an act in such a way that his whole existence is gathered in it and directed in it towards God, he works on the redemption of the world, on its conquest for God. But the sparks which need to be raised do not only rest in the things referred to by the mizvoth. The demarcation between that which is holy, that "is, that which has been appointed for hallowing, and that which is profane, that is that which lacks such a specific reference, is a provisional one. The Torah marks the circumference of revelation as it is up to the present. It depends on man whether and to what an extent this expands. "Why," asks a zaddik, "do we speak of 'the time when the Torah *is being* given' and not of 'the time when the Torah *has been* given'? God wills that all should be hallowed, until in the messianic time there will be no more division between what is holy and what is profane, because everything has become holy." Here again Hasidism has reached a position which is apparently in the closest proximity to that of Sabbatian theology; it cannot be different, as Hasidism conscientiously starts from the situation that bears the imprint of Sabbatianism; here again we see the unconditional opposition of Hasidism to Sabbatianism. The removal of the wall of partition between permitted and forbidden will not take place in the messianic hour, and thus supersede the Torah, but rather the messianic hour will mark the completion of the work by which all things and all life are penetrated by hallowing, and the Torah, which has become complete and entire, will include the whole of life; indeed, there will not any longer be anything except the existence into which the Torah has entered, and in which it has come to life. A saying from the early

time of Hasidism glosses the text, "Be holy, for I, YHVH, your God, am holy" by explaining "now the holiness of Israel comes from the *mizvoth*, as it is said in the prayer, 'as you have hallowed us through your commandments,' but in the future of which the talmudic teaching promises us that the *mizvoth* will be abolished, the holiness of Israel will come immediately from the holiness of God." And a later saying draws the conclusion of this in a comment on the text of Scripture which warns the people from "making carved work, figure of all that which YHVH your God commanded you": "Why," asks the comment, "does it say 'commanded' and not 'forbade'?" And the answer is, "because one should not make for oneself any idol of a *mizvah*, for seen in the light of the kingdom of God every *mizvah* is in suspense." On the other hand, there is no thing and no event of which I could say that it is not that which should be hallowed by me; at this stage of the reality of faith there is nothing which can any longer be found to be indifferent. As the religious acceptance of the *am ha-aretz* had overcome the traditional hierarchy of persons, so through the religious acceptance of the *adiaphora* the traditional hierarchy of acts was overcome. The *kavanoth* of prayer too that had been elaborated by the later Kabbalah for the unification of God and his *Shekhinah* recede from him who, as one of the greatest thinkers of Hasidism said about himself, "prays with the board and the bench." The great *kavanah* does not ally itself with any selection of what has been prescribed; everything which is done with that can be the right, the redeeming act. Each act may be the one on which all depends; the determining factor lies in the strength and concentration with which I do the hallowing. To the question of what had been the essential

point in the life of his late teacher, a disciple answered, "Every time that which he dealt with at the moment."

## VIII

Jacob Frank used to say of his star, the star which according to the prophecy of Balaam which he loved to quote, "appeared out of Jacob," that all despised and low things were in the power of this star, and only insofar as one gave oneself to it completely could one attain to redemption. In order to ascend the ladder of Jacob, which consists of two sloping ladders meeting on earth, one must first descend to its very base, before one can ascend. It is necessary to make "the alien fire," the fire of "sin," so one's own that one can offer it to God; the fire which the sons of Aaron offered is nothing in comparison with what one has to do at the bottom of the ladder. Therefore one must wholly enter into Edom, where "the alien acts" prevail (a description which is often found with the Sabbatians), not secretly as in Israel, but publicly; Jacob must not rest satisfied as he has done before with following in the footsteps of Esau, he must become one life with him. Esau or Edom must here be taken both in a literal and in a symbolic sense; in a literal sense, as when Frank expounded it by the mass-baptism of his adherents and through their apologetics; in a symbolic sense it stands for the dominion of sin, into which one must penetrate most deeply in order to conquer it; one must, as the Sabbatian saying has it, conquer the klipah in its house, one must fill the uncleanness with the strength of holiness, until it breaks from inside. The great fortress, as Frank expresses it in a characteristic simile, cannot be taken by all the arts and

crafts of siege, until an *am ha-aretz* at night sneaks in through a sewer, and seizes it.

The teaching of Frank about "the alien acts" has its parallel in the hasidic teaching of "the alien thoughts." Here also Hasidism starts from the same presuppositions as Sabbatianism, pre-suppositions which are common to both movements. The abyss has opened; it is no more allowed to any man to live as if evil did not exist. One cannot serve God by merely avoiding evil; one must grapple with it. The decisive difference lies in the fact that Hasidism has the insight to see that the breaking open of "the shells" is not at the end of this occupation, but at its beginning. The sparks of the light of God yearn for release from their deepest exile in that which we call evil. They come to us laden with the shells from which they cannot separate themselves; they come to us as "alien thoughts," as desires at all times, also during the time of prayer; indeed they come specially during the time of prayer, for they act always in common with the klipoth, as they must. The klipoth have never so great a desire to make us fall as when we pray and cleave to God, and the sparks of holiness demand never so much our deed as during the time of prayer, because then our strength is at its greatest. And the fulfilment of their demand cannot happen in any other way than in the form of the klipah, in the form of temptation, in other words, in our imaginative faculty. The old word that the greater a person is the greater is his impulse becomes modified: from the greatness of a temptation a soul knows how holy it is in the root of its being. Imagination is the power in us which is connected with the appearance of the sparks; and as this appearance comes from the blending of good and evil, it may be said

about it that it is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It is here that the decision takes place in each human being, and it is on this decision that the redemption depends. Therefore we should not push the alien thoughts away from us as something annoying and noisome, and thus repudiate the holy sparks. Their appearance is indeed an appearance of God in the things which are seemingly furthest from him, as it is written (*Jeremiah*, 31,2): "From afar has the Law appeared unto me." We should willingly receive this appearance, and do that which it demands of us: in the sphere of our imagination we should set free the pure passion from the object which limits it, and direct it to the limitless; in doing so we break the shells, and redeem the sparks which were bound in it. It is true that a man who in this way concerns himself with evil runs into great danger, and many zaddikim have issued the caution that it is reserved for holy people to go through this hazard. But it is held up against these zaddikim that each man is in the world in order to work on the purification and liberation of the world; in order to withstand the danger he should daily judge himself. In the fire of such a judgment the innermost heart becomes ever stronger, and the power of the klipah cannot touch it.

Here, in the realm of "the alien thoughts," it is necessary that the object on which the desire is directed in the imagination of man should become as if transparent, so that it may lose its daemonic power, and set free the looking towards God. It is different in the realm of the natural existence of man, his life with nature, his work, his friendships, his marriage, his solidarity with the community; here the object of the inclination and the joy should remain in all reality, for they are real and not only possible; one should,

and one must, truly live with all, but one should live with all in holiness, one should hallow all that one does in one's natural life. No renunciation is commanded. One eats in holiness, tastes the taste of food in holiness, and the table becomes an altar. One works in holiness, and he raises up the sparks which hide themselves in all tools. One walks in holiness across the fields, and the soft songs of all herbs, which they voice to God, enter into the song of our soul. One drinks in holiness to each other with one's companions, and it is as if they read together in the Torah. One dances the roundelay in holiness, and a brightness shines over the gathering. A husband is united with his wife in holiness, and the shekhinah rests over them.

The love between husband and wife is, as is well-known, a high principle of existence in the Kabbalah, not only because it offers an image of the union of "the sephiroth," of the emanated spheres, and of the decisive union between God and the shekhinah too, but also because it is of the utmost importance for the sake of the redemption that the holy souls who have not yet completed their earthly wandering are incarnated anew through conception and birth, and drawn into the terrestrial world. Nothing can so well make clear to us the contrast of the appearances after the sabbatian crises as when we set side by side what has developed out of that conception in Frankism and in Hasidism. I can here only give one characteristic example of each development.

In the chronicle which Frank's disciples wrote of his deeds, it is told how Frank during his imprisonment in Czenstochowa, where he enjoyed a very far-reaching freedom, directed the request to the women of his circle, called

"the sisters," that they should unanimously choose one from among themselves as a representative of them all, and hand her over to him; he would take her to himself, and she would be blessed through the birth of a daughter. His wife, who was with him, offered that she should be the person chosen, but he declined her, as it was decided for her that she should bear sons and not daughters. As the rivalries could not be overcome, "the sisters" could not reach a unanimous decision, and, after a violent quarrel, they asked "the holy lord" that he should make the choice himself. Frank was seized by a fit of great anger, which lasted for some weeks.

Over against this grotesque event, whose specifically religious background is, however, unmistakable, I put a small occurrence which I have taken from the record which a grandson of Rabbi Mordechai of Stashow wrote of his grandfather's life. At first Rabbi Mordechai was a pupil of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk, and after the latter's death he became a pupil of "the Seer" of Lublin. The Seer said once to him: "We will now hand over to you a couple of hundred Jews so that you yourself may lead a community." Rabbi Mordechai answered that he would consult his wife. When he returned home and told her of the proposal, she exclaimed: "Come now, come now, let us first be Jews ourselves." He then went back to the Seer, declared that he could not accept his suggestion, and gave as his reason what his wife had said. When the Seer heard it, he said: "From now on do not come to me on the festivals, but remain with your wife. The holy souls wait for you two."

# The Foundation Stone

## I

HASIDISM, like early Christianity, has sometimes been described as a revolt of the Am-haaretz, *i.e.*, the unlearned people of the land, of the masses of the people who do not concern themselves with the study of doctrine. By this it was meant that the essential motive of the Hasidic movement was the revolt of the ignorant multitude, often treated with scorn by religious tradition, against this scale of values in which the scholar, immersed in the knowledge of the Torah, occupies the highest place. The true striving of the movement therefore is understood to be for a radical change of values, for a new order of precedence, in which not the expert in the Torah stands at the top, but the one who lives it, who embodies it in the simple unity of his life; and the simple unity is more often to be found in the Am-haaretz than in the Lamdan, the profound scholar. The root of this striving for a radical change of values was to be seen in the alteration of the social structure of East European Jewry, as it took place at the very time when Hasidism came into the world.

We cannot fail to recognize the germ of truth in this interpretation. One cannot understand the tremendous in-



fluence exerted by Hasidism on the mass of the people, unless one observes the "democratic" strain in it, its peculiar tendency to set, in place of the existing "aristocracy" of the spiritual domain, the equal right of all to approach the absolute Being. Inequality may prevail in all things pertaining to the outer life: into the inmost realm, into the relationship to God, it may not penetrate. This makes the reality of the difference between privileged and unprivileged easier to bear, for the worst prerogative is eliminated, the prerogative which widened and deepened the gulf between the believer and the object of his belief. It is true that such a revolution can only take place in the history of religion, if it has been preceded by tremors in the heart of society. But the essential question is, what part the social factor plays in this general process.

Since the importance of the social factor in the history of the spirit has been discovered, we are naturally inclined to overrate its value. Against this the chief task here, as in every genuine consideration, is the demarcation of the spheres. Now, nowhere else does the limited power of the social factor appear so clearly as in the history of religion. Through that it is determined that new contents of teaching and of living, new articles of belief and myths, new symbols and rites, shall at a given time take the place of others and find their way into the life of the people—their measure and response depend on it; but not the contents themselves. The idea that religious forms always rise afresh from social "conditions" is an error, impoverishing the world of the spirit; these influence the extent of the validity of things, that is to say, only under certain social conditions can the way be paved for what is new; but it arises out of conflicts

and contacts in the heart of religion itself. The economic development here supplies only the fertilizing powers; the spirit supplies the powers of the seed.

This applies especially to that sphere of religious life in which Hasidism is one of the great historical phenomena. We are accustomed to call this sphere mysticism, but for the sake of clarity we must emphasise that here we are not speaking of speculations detached from human experience, speculations for example about the emanative relationship between God and the world; we are speaking of a teaching founded on human experience, and concerning itself solely with what comes to pass between man and God. This teaching does indeed make use of those speculations, and it may be that it will always continue to use them, as Hasidism does, but only in order to bind them ever again to human existence and personal practice, in order to substantiate them by existence and practice. Mysticism in this sense points to the realm of the person, and builds on it, though in its extreme forms it proclaims as the ultimate goal the elimination of the person and its merging in the divine Being. It is not to be understood however from this that we concern ourselves with this mysticism in its particular character, because it is "personal." The mystic enters upon his mystical experience, which is destined to be the foundation of his teaching, not from a neutral space of earth, but from the living space of a concrete religion, in which he is at home and to which he returns again and again; indeed even his experience itself is in no small measure marked by the traditions and life structures of this religion. Even if he appears to break away from the dogmas of his religion, he remains bound up with its vitality. Mysticism is a historical phenomenon. This

stands out most strongly, where it becomes a "movement," that is where the teaching and the way of life of the mystics affect more than the circle of their disciples, lay hold on the people, give them an example and a pattern, and call forth profound changes in the people's beliefs and soul. If we inquire into the character of the historical situation in which the spark of mystical existence springs over onto the people, then we usually find that it is a time of more or less manifest inner crisis in religion. If the validity and faith-reality of the traditions and structures of a religion are shattered, either as a result of increasing degeneration, or as a result of exceptional events, if therefore the response of this religion to the problems of human existence, of individual existence and of the existence of the people, becomes questionable, then very often mysticism rises to combat the widespread doubt, the outbreak of despair. It transforms the fundamental motive of mystical speculation into vital motives, not only in the exposition of teaching but above all in life itself, on the soil from which it arose, and so endows this religion with a wealth of new vital power. It strengthens the shattered structures, it gives new purport to the statements which had come to be questioned and makes them worthy of belief once more, it enfuses a new meaning into forms emptied of their meaning, and renews them from within, it restores to religion its binding power. The fact that the people receive mysticism in such a way is conditioned by social motives, by social changes, by social strivings, but what mysticism gives to the people cannot be grasped from things social; the vital power, which it presents to religion, has its source in the inner religious dynamic itself, the creative sap in it rises from those very root beds,

in which the substance of belief decomposes and renews itself.

Thus it is with Hasidism.

## II

The Sabbatian-Frankist revolt, of which the second part, the Satyr-drama, was more bitter than the first, the tragedy, brought Jewry not only, as is usually stated, to the brink of a precipice, but already led it to put one foot into the gaping chasm itself. That the main host of those possessed accomplished their change of faith, in the one case to Islam, in oppression and in secrecy, in the other case to Christianity, openly and with display, both however extolling as it were the action to a holy act in the service of the God of Israel, that was only a symptom of the poison which had penetrated into the inmost parts of the body of the people. The tremendous process, which lasted for hundreds of years, cannot be regarded only as an external catastrophe, from which those particularly affected betake themselves to the outside of the camp, the remainder however, only partly affected by the shock, return so to speak to the same point in the usual course of their life. The seeds of disintegration have penetrated, without being noticed, to the remotest members of the people, who were apparently quite untouched by the occurrence, and even he who struggled wrathfully against the evil must withstand firmly their assaults in the gloomy depths of his own soul, in the turmoil of dreams. Severing from the whole that part of the body where the pestilence had broken out in boils is no healing; the powerful poison can only be overcome by a powerful antidote. It chiefly depends on

whether this has been long prepared and made ready in the inmost tissues of the organism, so that it only needs developing to its full strength and setting in action, and on whether the developing and activating strength is present in the form of new leaders and a new leadership. If both coincide, the healing succeeds.

That poison cannot, like a chemical one, be given a name or formula. If we wish to describe it indirectly, we can do so best by speaking of the lust for overrunning reality. Instead of making reality the starting point of life, full as it is of harsh contradictions, but for this very reason calling forth true greatness, namely the quiet work of overcoming the contradictions, man submits to illusion, becomes intoxicated with it, surrenders his life to it, and in the very measure in which he does this the core of his existence becomes burning and unfruitful, he becomes at once completely stimulated and in his motive power crippled. This lust for overrunning reality led to man acting and teaching as if there existed a condition of perfection, of messianic fulfilment, which in truth did not exist; it led to a mode of behaviour that according to its intention abolished the structures and ruined the values, and which, free from all bonds of law and authority, saw no other way before it than that of passionate attachment to the pseudomessianic occurrence. It is quite a mistake to speak here of an overzealous belief; true belief, even the most zealous, is not "blind," it sees reality and does not deceive itself, it only listens also to what is above this reality, what authorises belief and gives it power to alter reality. If however an illusory world replaces the real one, then superstition reigns, fraught with deadly perils.

This powerful poison too could only be overcome by a powerful antidote, and with an individual or a people that have given themselves up to illusion that can only take place through a renewed communion with reality. "Renewed" here signifies to be sure a contrast to "old," for it is a vain endeavour to want to bring about such a thing on the basis of former situations instead of that in which one finds oneself, and one can only seek the salvation for a historical hour out of its own antecedents, which previously were non-existent; but it also signifies something very different from "new," for the materials necessary for the manufacture of the medicine cannot be manufactured, they must be there ready. Everything depends upon linking up again with the past and a revolution at the same time; the re-entrance into tradition, but a tradition which has been transformed. That is what took place here in Hasidism. The renewed communion with reality, which it established, is a mingling of the ever-gushing streams, both open and secret; but that which it drew from these became new in its hands.

It was a medicine, but that is not to be taken to mean that it arose from an *intention* to heal. Medicines of this kind, which work widely and deeply, never arise from a mere intention; they are the product of a personal *existence*, in which the salvation, the renewed communion with reality, is embodied. Existence is not directed towards this task, it is only what it is, and therefore works what it works. And indeed it interprets itself in a teaching as one interprets a traditional text, but it is not itself that it aims at, but the truth. Both together, existence and the teaching interpreting it, bring the medicine into effect. They awaken a faith, which

is no more fed by illusion, but by reality, a faith in mankind, and thence in life, and thence in God.

The personal existence, that accomplishes such a task, can only be a "naïve" one, that is, an existence directed entirely towards its object; it cannot be a "reflexive" one, that is, one that deals with its own problem. It also cannot be a theoretical one, that is, one that lays hold on the object to which it is directed by abstracting it from reality, or by seeking to penetrate beyond reality in a mystically contemplative manner. It can only be a vital existence, if it lives in direct contact with reality, and sharing this simple life with reality thinks what it thinks and contemplates what it contemplates, neither more nor less than what the concreteness of this life offers it. This naivety, vitality, simplicity and directness, form the personal nucleus, around which the elements of the new movement crystallize. It acts as the pattern of the renewed communion with reality. It draws to it all of a like mind among the simple folk. It lays the foundation for the new type of leader. The appearance of the Baal-shem-tov is the fundamental fact of Hasidism.

In our time, which is passionately endeavouring to wear away the personal form, it is the custom to probe into such phenomena until as little as possible remains of the reality of the personal substance. So there is a tendency to set up in the place of those first ones, dear to tradition, disciples, who in contradiction to them have left behind a teaching coherent in itself. The point of view, which sees in Sabbatai Zwi only an unimportant vessel, which through gifted adherents was filled with personal purport, and set before an easily beguiled multitude, may it is true be justified: such an

inflation of nothingness into central magnificence is meet for the realm of illusion. But if an attempt is made to reduce the personal figure of the Baal-shem-tov to a propagandist embellishment of what the great Hasidic thinkers, allegedly the founders of the movement, together with their disciples created, then the very being of a movement of this kind is radically misunderstood. It begins with the relationship of a small community to a leading and teaching person; the *reality* of this man and not his semblance is what constitutes the community; from this the renewed relationship of the people to reality mounts in ever growing circles. For as the individual, so also the community, can only achieve a true relationship to reality through the relationship to the reality of one man, to his real existence: the illusory world vanishes, the being itself becomes manifest, and can be trusted.

Though reliable information about the life of the Baal-shem-tov may be slight, we possess a trustworthy tradition, which tells us that men of high spiritual standing, great scholars of open and secret teaching, attached themselves to him and served him. According to legend one of them found the solution of his most difficult problems as he listened to his prayer, a second broke out into weeping during the Baal-shem-tov's prayer, and with this began a transformation of his whole life, and a third lost the power of the spirit as he heard his simple words, and became completely subject to the wonderful man; the essence of all this is confirmed by notes of the disciples themselves. The writings of one of them, Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoe, whom we may call the Xenophon of the Baal-shem-tov (a Plato he did not have; the one who was so qualified, Rabbi Dov Baer the Maggid of Mesritch, cites it is true some sayings of the



master in his teachings, but discloses practically nothing about his person), are strong testimony to the veneration, which the scholar bestowed on the man of direct enlightenment, testimony to the complete change in the scale of values; it is no more the sagacious and the expert in religious wisdom, nor the ascetic, isolated and buried in contemplation, who is considered the pattern for man, but the pure and undivided, who walks with God in the midst of the world, takes part in the life of the people, and raises it up to God.

Even we ourselves can perceive something of that working of reality, if we read the words of the Baal-shem-tov. Indeed we only possess of his teachings what the disciples cite, fragments, the majority of which have certainly been altered in the transmission, confused with additions of the disciples, so that it seems almost hopeless for us to hear the voice of the master above the babel of voices surrounding. Yet we succeed in a certain measure, just because the records are so many and so different: we put aside, so to speak, all the diversity, and before us remains something simple and undivided, not a great and continuous discourse, and not enough to reconstruct such, if it should ever have existed, but at all events the word of a man, a word having its own accent and sense of life. We listen and listen, and then an amazing freshness can be heard, that which only comes into the world of speech, if a man, after draining the cup of spiritual disillusionments, dares to stand face to face with reality.

Listen only to a saying like this, which more than forty years ago made me into a Hasid of the Baal-shem-tov: "He shall seize the quality of eagerness with might, he shall rise eagerly from sleep, for he is become hallowed, and is

become another man, and is worthy to beget, and is become imbued with the quality of the Holy One, praised be He, Who begat worlds." The saying is based upon many utterances of the Kabbalists, nevertheless who before the Baal-shem-tov, who besides him, has spoken thus to us? I say: to us, for this is the crux of the matter: whoever has heard him feels that the speech is directed at him. The tale that tells that among those listening to a discourse from the mouth of the Baal-shem-tov every one understood it as if it were spoken to him, in answer to his needs, his doubt and the restless questionings of his inner life, this tale undoubtedly tells the truth. The same truth we still feel even now. This is not a teaching, that, far above the level of our existence, is confined within itself, and only transmits to our understanding a gleam from higher worlds, but neither is it merely a guide showing our soul the pathway upward: it is a help in our concrete life,—our life itself is uplifted by the words spoken to us, if we listen to them. Reality calls to reality; the reality of a man, who in intercourse with the reality of Being has lived in its fullness, arouses the reality in us and helps us to live in intercourse with the reality of being in its fulness. And here the words of the Baal-shem-tov in the interpretation of Rabbi Jacob Joseph are applicable: "If the disciples do not draw from the source, the master is called hardtongued."

### III

The Sabbatian-Frankist crisis was above all else a crisis of teaching.

The Torah, the Teaching of Israel, is a teaching of dis-

inction. As Creation is founded upon separation: in space—between the upper and the lower waters: in time—between day and night, and so on, and at the end of Creation stands man, he is also divided into man and woman; so in Revelation man is bidden to distinguish: between God and idols, between true and false prophets, between pure and impure, between good and evil, between holy and profane; to sum up: between what conforms to God's purpose and what does not. For an uncertain multiplicity there is no place, in all things the principle of polar dualism prevails. But unlike the cosmic divisions, which embrace both poles in the same affirmative, the divisions of Revelation are provided with the most definite stresses of yes and no, of pleasure and disapproval, likewise the "ethical" distinction between the two ways of good and evil, or on the other hand perfection ranges itself at the one end, and leaves a great space for all else that it does not include, likewise the "cultic" distinction between holy and profane. And the fate of man, his fate in the strictest sense, that of the individual and that of the community, depends on true discernment. In the realm of the holy this finds expression in the tradition that whosoever tampers with its symbols unlawfully has forfeited his life; in the realm of good and evil it finds expression in the pronouncement that God has set before the people "life and good, and death and evil." Here the structures of Creation, to which life and death belong, are mingled with the structures of Revelation. Together with this it becomes clear at this point that the distinction which is taught in the Torah signifies decision, a decision in which man decides about himself.

But with the unfolding of the third realm, which is

added to Creation and Revelation, the realm of the "end of the days," the problem arises, whether the distinction imposed on man is valid for ever. If a messianic completion of Creation is to be expected, a completion in which man too, and man especially, reaches perfection, then there is in reality no room left for the distinctions laid down in the Torah. If at the end of the days, as the later prophets saw, the teaching has been written in the heart of men, so that they perceive God directly, then together with the threat of sin the whole series of conceptions of cross-road and decision is abolished; the distinction between good and evil must then lose its concrete meaning. Furthermore, if the task imposed upon Israel, of becoming holy because its God is holy, is accomplished in the coming time, then the distinction between holy and profane is also abolished with it, for who so has become holy can then perform nothing, which was hitherto profane, otherwise than in holiness; the entire realm of the profane is engulfed in the realm of the holy. In messianic perspective the essential distinctions of the Torah appear provisional and transitory. Whatever the perfect man does, whatever he experiences, is as such in conformity with God. Nothing further is demanded of this man, he is free of all "obligation," for all of obligation has already been performed, man is what he is, he lives as he lives, and therein he has his completion.

The Sabbatian movement, which found this idea already prepared, concludes from the fact that the Messiah has come, that the antecedents are already fulfilled. It supposes—in its early days doubtless with that measure of belief, which is given to superstition too, and later together with the effort to reach a similar state by way of a willed ecstasy

—that the hour of completion is there. But it does not content itself with taking away the negative character from the conception of sin, and therefore making sin something neutral; it raises it to holiness, because sin committed in holiness paves the way for the messianic world. Whosoever does in holiness what was hitherto counted as sin, conquers this piece of Being for perfection. He breaks into the "shell," and fills it with holiness, until it bursts. The work of redemption can only be fulfilled if the redeeming strength penetrates wickedness itself, lays hold on it, transforms it, redeems it. That happens by man doing evil without doing it as an evil. There exists here therefore a contradiction between deed and intention, but this contradiction is resolved by holiness: since this man is holy, all that he does is holy.

Such "gnostic" tendencies have arisen from time to time in the historic religions, and they have always relied on the thesis that man has achieved perfection and holiness in the form of this or that person. This one thing lay at the root of them all, that the person upon whom the spirit descended appeared transformed thereby, both in his own mind and in the mind of others, into the perfect man, and that his inner fulness and confusion was transfigured by attributes from the sphere of holiness. In Judaism the messianic pathos came in addition, the inspired belief in the dependence of the redemption of the people and the world on the man who appears as the perfect man, and on his deeds. Therefore here the problematic penetrates into the inmost life of the people.

The teaching of Israel is a teaching of distinction; from now on there was no more object to be distinguished. The teaching of Israel means the harmonising each with the other of the distinction good-evil, and the distinction holy-

profane; from now on the fire of the "holy" devoured the substance of good and evil. We could see therein a victory of the religious over the ethical, if it did not rest upon an illusion: with the discovery of the illusion the apparently victorious religious principle had to lose its foundation without the defeated ethical one coming into its rights again.

The crisis of the Torah was already latent in the fact of illusion; it broke out as soon as this was found out. It is true that even then many of the men of the Torah stood their ground, as though nothing had happened; but their word had no longer the soul-compelling power. The main substance of the people was shaken in the reality of its belief. That the messianic hope has failed still brings no inner catastrophe with it; disappointed, exhausted, worn out, the people return to their unmessianic mode of life again, and the traditional structures help man to live his life. Not so if these structures have themselves been called into question. The Jewish people had withstood the sorrows of exile, because it was certain of possessing in the Torah the right way, a way which, although they might deviate from it at times, yet brings them whither they must come,—if man does but know how to distinguish between the right way and the wrong ones. This knowledge seems to have been taken away from the people in the days of the illusion, when it acted as though it had reached its goal, and had no longer need of a way. The Torah had come face to face with the life of the impulses subduing and selecting them, it had bidden to remain near to the holy even in the natural realm of profanity; now however it seemed as if the holy itself were breaking through all barriers and taking up its domicile

in the midst of the forbidden, the impure. The original illusion vanished, to be sure, which had deluded its followers that the messianic days had come, the Torah was ended, and in its place stood the direct enjoyment of the divine in all things; but now there arose subtle constructions of aid, and after them came a new utterly unruly illusion. And whosoever set himself up against it was contaminated by it in the hidden places of his soul. In the outer world the frenzy gripped only the circles of the sectarians; but in secret the minds of men succumbed. The soul, whose bonds were loosed, made bold to find God as its property in nature, in its own nature. It refused to return to the pre-messianic age. And if people could no longer believe in the existing perfection, then they conjured it up with all kinds of arts.

These are the days in which people still fulfill the commandments, but with a soul squinting away from its own deeds. They are the days in which evil reigns, the evil the Torah has in mind; the invasion by chaos of the cosmos of Revelation. They are the days of temptations, which the Torah in men's hearts is no longer strong enough to expel, for behind the demonic mask people fancy to behold the countenance of God's freedom; they do not allow themselves to be deluded by those temptations, but neither do they drive them away. They are particularly obtrusive during prayer; then every image becomes temptation; they act as if at home, and promise man a different God from the One he calls upon. The realms are overthrown, everything encroaches upon everything else, and possibility is more powerful than reality.

It was needful that the teaching of the Baal-shem-tov

should make its entrance at this point and bring healing, and it did so.

#### IV

Legend tells that in the days of the Baal-shem-tov a man became celebrated for the wonderful qualities of his spirit. The Hasidim asked their master if it would be fitting for them to go to that man and to test him. "Go, by all means," he said. Again they asked, "How shall we know whether he is a true Zaddik?" "Ask him for a counsel," answered the Baal-shem-tov, "how 'alien thoughts' are to be banished. If he gives you a counsel, then you will know that he is of no importance. For with them man must struggle until his last moment, and even this struggle is man's work in the world." The alien thoughts which come upon men in hours of prayer and study to divert their minds and lead them astray, so that they may crave for things, which they set before their inner gaze,—great is their power of determination in the coherence of life, and we ought not to wish them to leave us completely. In our language: phantasy—for it is of this that we are speaking—which seeks to draw us away from truth is a necessary element in serving it. We should not reject its abundance, which captivates our hearts, but admit and fit it into the real existence; only in the strength of such an act shall we achieve that unity, which does not shun the world but embraces it. To do this however we must achieve what is most difficult: transformation. We must convert the element that seeks to take possession of us into the substance of real life.

To understand this aright, we must first of all grasp



something essential: the "alien thoughts," their coming to man, and their acting on him, are in the eyes of the Baal-shem-tov not what we call a psychological phenomenon, but a phenomenon that belongs to the cosmic sphere and even reaches beyond it. In each of them lies a spark, which springs from the very early revolutions of the upper world, from the "breaking of the vessels" in the language of the Kabbala. They are "bright lights," "which have sunk down to the depths, and put on dirty clothes." From out of this, its prison, the spark yearns to be released, and this its yearning is the driving power, which brings the "alien thoughts" to man. If he succeeds in freeing the pure spark from the daemonic "shell," then he helps it to return to its divine origin. So the Baal-shem-tov interpreted the verse bidding the beautiful woman, whom a man in her captivity saw, longed for, and took to wife: "She shall cast off the robe of her captivity." An "alien thought" is not to be accepted at its face value, in its bespotted clothes, but these are to be removed, then its light rises like the flush of dawn. Indeed it is really the divine essence itself, which is concealed in the "alien thoughts" and desires man to find it in them, to break through to it and free it; God Himself calls us, and summons us.

What we describe therefore as phantasy is no free play of the soul, but every time a real encounter with real elements of Being, which are outside ourselves, and the most important thing is not to yield to the phantasy images appearing before us, but to separate the core from the shell, and to redeem those elements themselves. What we think we are working out in our own soul alone, we are in truth working out for the fate of the world. Whoever does not believe

this, does not fully take upon himself the "yoke of heaven," for he derogates from the reality of God. Whoever takes the yoke of heaven fully upon him, knows every time: "This thought has not come to me in vain, but so that I may raise it up, and if not now, then when?"

From here we gain an insight into the relationship between good and evil, which is completely different from the customary, purely ethical, view point. In the insight which we gain, the teaching of the Talmud, that man must serve God with both impulses, that is, he must allow all the power which breaks out into desires to flow into the work, is blended with the teaching of the Kabbala on the fallen sparks. The Shekhina embraces both, the "good" and the "evil," but the evil not as an independent substance, but as the "throne of goodness," as "the lowest step of utter good," as the power that goes astray, and that in order to become good," only needs to discover the right road to God. It is the thornbush which, seized by divine fire, becomes the revelation of God.

The "Evil Impulse" "disguises itself as a servant in revolt against his master"; in reality, however, it is faithful and fulfils its charge. All temptations come from God, Who cloaks Himself in the "evil" powers. But they are real temptations; the fateful seriousness of choice, the pathos of the ever-recurring division of the ways into life and death are in the thoughts of the Baal-shem-tov no less important than at any other time, only evil and good are no longer separated from one another like two different qualities, but like unformed and formed matter, they are no more like left and right, but like lower and upper, like thornbush and fire. It is for man to let the thornbush be completely pene-

trated by the fire. It is for him to bind the lust of the temptation itself to God. It is for him so to elevate the love for a beautiful being that this love becomes love for the source of all beauty, the source that makes the beautiful beautiful: so love returns home from exile. It is for man to elevate the awe, which descends upon him before a human or cosmic power, into the awe of the power of the Almighty: immediately the awe does not subsist anymore as fear, it subsists as admiration and worship. It is for man to forge anew the glowing mass of wrath into zeal for God. It is for man to change the pleasures of earth into the enjoyment of heavenly splendour.

Sin is the going astray of power, but the power itself is from God. "The Shekhina is from above downwards, right to the end of all stages, and this is the secret of the saying, 'And Thou dost animate them all.' Even if a man commits a sin, the Shekhina cloaks Herself therein. For without this there would be in him no strength to act and to move a limb. . . . And this is as it were the exile of the Shekhina." If we use the power of the Shekhina to do evil, then we ourselves drive Her into exile.

As this is so, as sin is only an erring outbreak of a great power coming from the Shekhina, we can understand the secret of the pleasure, which the sinner feels, and also the mystery of turning. For whosoever has sinned is not yet lost. Should you have through your sin repudiated the sparks, you have not yet blocked their ascent: it is in your power to raise them through your turning. This is what is meant, when it is said about God, that He "bears iniquity": He bears it and raises it into the world above. The offender, therefore, who is full of desire and capable of

turning, is dearer to God than the apparently righteous man, who fulfils all outward commandments without the true surrender of the heart, without "attachment," and before whom, because he considers himself welcome, the doors of turning are barred. But also among the truly righteous there are two types. They are recognisable by their relationship to the evil impulse. The one conducts himself as a man, who sees at night that a thief has slipped into his shop, and cries out: the thief flees and all is as if nothing had happened. The other is like one, who does not disturb the thief, but lets him approach until he can seize him and bind him. The first drives evil away, the second changes it into good; and of this man the saying is true: "Who is a hero? He who controls his power." He compels the evil power to teach him, and he learns from it. The verse "From every man, whose heart stirs him, you shall take my offering" the Baalshem-tov interpreted thus: It is by that which he longs for, that every man knows and apprehends the quality with which he has to serve God.

This is the one antidote, which Hasidism has used. Sabbatianism had produced the illusion, that man could redeem evil by doing it without doing it as evil. That is an illusion, for all that man does reacts on his soul, even when he fancies that his soul hovers over the deed. In face of this Hasidism has established the fact that the undirected power, which breaks forth in the desire, can be directed unto truth, that the blind power can be made to see. Thereby is the teaching of distinction renewed, at a time, when the distinction between good and evil had become questionable.

The psychoanalysis of our day has again taken up the Hasidic view in the form of the theory of the "sublimation

of the libido," according to which the stimuli can be diverted, and carried over into the realm of the spirit, therefore changing so to speak their form of energy. Everything here is limited to psychic events alone, while Hasidism teaches ever and again the actual contact with other essences. "Sublimation" takes place within the man himself, the "raising of the spark" takes place between man and the world.

## V

That the essence of the Hasidic message consisted in establishing a renewed relationship with reality stands out yet more clearly in another fundamental view, which is connected with the first but transcends in a greater degree the realm of the soul.

The sparks doctrine of the later Kabbala has become in the hands of the Baal-shem-tov an ethical teaching, and has been amplified into a precept embracing the whole life of man. In a primordial catastrophe before the creation of our world, (in the time when God set up worlds and tore them down), sparks of the divine fire fell into all things in the world. The spark is concealed in a material shell, in a mineral, in a plant, in an animal—a complete form similar to that of man, with the head on the thighs, unable to move hands or feet, embryo-like. Only through man is there redemption for him. It rests with men to purge the sparks of things and beings, which are met with every day, and to raise them to ever higher stages, to ever higher births, from mineral to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man, until the holy spark can return

to its origin. To have done this is to have delivered a king's son from captivity.

Man's service with the sparks takes place in everyday life; man can perform it in everything that he does, even in the most profane bodily acts, which bring him into contact with things and beings, for even the most profane deed can be done in holiness, and whoever performs it in holiness raises up the sparks. In the clothes which you put on, in the implements you use, in the food you eat, in the domestic animal that works for you, in all of these are hidden sparks, which yearn for redemption, and if you treat things and beings with care and goodwill and faithfulness, then you redeem them. God gives you the clothing and the food belonging to the root of your soul, so that you may redeem the sparks in them. Man can serve Him in all his deeds, and He wills that man shall serve Him in them all. For this it is written: "In all thy ways thou shalt know Him." As the seed sown in the ground draws its strength from it, and brings forth fruit, so the man, who performs his service, draws the sparks out of all things that are rooted in his soul, and raises them to God.

Frequently the disciples quote the interpretation of the Baal-shem-tov of the queer Haggadic saying, which tells of the patriarch, Enoch, how he was a cobbler, and with each stitch of his bodkin as it sewed the upper leather and the sole together, he joined together God and His Shekhina. The Baal-shem-tov interpreted the verse: "All that thy hand findeth to do, do in thy strength." All that you do, the Baal-shem-tov says, do it with the power of your soul and your mind, that you may join together the Holy One, praised be He, and His Shekhina. Herewith two things are

said. Firstly, what man does he should do with whole being. And in order to eliminate the view that only spiritual values are meant, the Baal-shem-tov says emphatically, "That he should do the deed that he is doing with all the limbs of his body." It concerns therefore the whole spiritual-physical being, which through the outpouring of the spirit in all its members is made one unity; with this united spiritual-physical being the man must do what he does. And secondly, it is man's duty to do all that he does with the purpose of uniting the highest divine Essence with its Shekhina, which dwells in the world. Nowhere however is there, as in all ascetic teaching, which attempts to surmount reality, a hint that the indwelling principle would draw itself out of the world, but on the contrary, the union of those separated means the union of God with the world, which remains world, except that now it, the world, is redeemed. In every movement that he performs, in every word that he utters, man must direct his being towards union; a disciple of a disciple of the Baal-shem-tov expresses the significance of this for concrete life in a clear example, doubtless in the spirit of the master: "In business affairs his mind is devoted in love and friendship to human beings." The same disciple concludes elsewhere the exposition of this teaching with words, which lay particular stress on its central importance: "For if you do not believe that the reality of God is in all things, and you can unite unions by using all that is in the world, all working and business and eating and drinking, but you do not believe, and you do not do it, and you regard it as evil, and flee from it, then there must needs be (here comes the explanation of the continuation of that verse from Ecclesiastes "All that thy hand findeth to do, do in thy

strength") 'nothing,' for, 'work and reckoning and skill,' that thou hast, 'are in the netherworld to which thou goest.' "

Thereby the decisive step towards the renewing of the relationship with reality is taken. It is only by way of true intercourse with things and beings that man achieves true life, but also it is by this way only that he can take an active part in the redemption of the world. The Baal-shem-tov saw, as we have said, even in the power of imagination a kind of encounter, for which there are special tasks; all the more existence in reality is recognisable as an unbroken chain of encounters, each of which demands the whole person for what can be accomplished by him, just by him and only in this hour. In place of the illusion of the allegedly accomplished fulfilment, as it prevailed in the confusion of the false Messiahship, stands the life of every day, which has found its fulfilment, as the true miracle.

And thereby is the crisis of the Torah overcome. The teaching of the "alien thoughts" which changed the speculation of the Kabbala into a living and popular ethos, renewed the division between good and evil, but in such a way that it now concerned itself with the problematics arisen in the epoch, and answered it. It no longer contented itself with attacks against sin, such as united the pre-Sabbatian era; it absorbed the new experience, the experience of exaltation out of sin, and affirmed the powers of desire, rather indeed asked for them, in order to direct them to their true end. The teaching of "Enoch, the cobbler" proceeded from this speculation, but it went further. However fundamental the distinction between holy and profane has been in Judaism, yet always the wish awoke to invest the holy with work and influence in the sphere of the profane too, and so build the



bridge. This wish was now fulfilled. Nothing in the world is utterly foreign to the holy, anything can become its vessel. The Sabbatian theology preached the conquest of sin through the holy; now the demonic character of this preaching is shown by the simple Hasidic commandment that penetrated the heart of the simple believer, the commandment to do all that he does with the whole of his being. For sin is just this, what man cannot by its very nature do with his whole being; it is possible to silence the conflict in the soul, but it is not possible to uproot it. Now on the contrary, in the teaching of the Baal-shem-tov, the conquest of the realm of the profane by the holy takes place in truth, the conquest of the realm of things of licence, the *adiaphora*. There sin was pronounced holy; here we are concerned with hallowing intercourse with all things and beings in everyday life.

The first revolt of the *Am-haaretz*, the revolt of early Christianity, rushed out of the gates of Judaism. The second revolt, the Hasidic one, remained within the confines of Judaism. For unlike the first, which demanded that men should live as if the kingdom of God had dawned, Hasidism affirmed the natural reality of the still unmessianic time as the material to be hallowed, and thereby it affirmed the people as such, the great unholy body, which is destined to be hallowed.

# Spirit and Body of the Hasidic Movement

## 1 *Spirit*

MOVEMENTS which strive for a renewal of society mean mostly by it that the axe should be put to the root of the present order; over against the existing order, which they reject, they set quite a different order created by striving thought. Not so the religious movements which aim at a renewal of the soul. Be the principle which a true religious movement urges ever so opposed to the state of religion paramount in the environment, the movement feels and expresses this contradiction not as a contradiction of the really existing, original content of tradition; much more does it feel and declare itself as called upon to purify this original content of its present accretions, to restore it, to "bring it back." But from this same starting-point the religious movements may proceed very differently in their relation to the prevailing faith. Against and instead of the later stage of tradition the old-new principle may set in a living form its own message; it will then present its message as the overlaid, original truth which now has been rescued and brought to light, and it will show it to the world in the central man who has been "sent" to restore it, and with whom it is even identified. In this case the complete separation soon takes place; such movements may be called

movements of foundation. Or the principle may go back exclusively to an older stage of tradition, to "the pure word," which it feels it has to liberate, and against whose distortion it fights. In this case a partial separation takes place; on the whole the mythico-dogmatic and magico-cultic basis remains untouched, and, regardless of the severance that has taken place in organisation, the spiritual unity continues to exist; such movements may be called movements of reformation. Or the principle may also accept the tradition with undiminished value in the form which it has; it will recognise the teaching and dogmas of tradition in their full contemporary elaboration, without examining their historical credentials, and without comparing them with any original form; but the principle sheds a new light over the teaching and dogmas, it lets them attain to a new spirituality, to a new meaning, they are renewed by it in their vitality without being changed in their substance. In this case no separation takes place, though here also the struggle must blaze up between the old and the new, and it may take the most violent forms. The new community remains within the old community from which it sprang, and tries to penetrate this from within—two forces, the moving force and the constant force, measure themselves against each other, the strife quickly shifts to the ground of the new community itself to continue among its members, indeed even within the heart of the individual himself; naturally the conditions of the struggle ever more and more favour the force of inertia. The hasidic movement belongs to movements of this kind. It proceeded from Podolia and Volhynia about the middle of the eighteenth century; by the end of the century it had laid hold of Jewry in the whole of the king-

dom of Poland, as well as in considerable parts of north-east Hungary and Moldavia; about the middle of the nineteenth century it had become a spiritually dead, but numerically powerful, movement, which is still in existence to this day.

All true religious movements desire not so much to offer men the solution of the secret of the world, as to arm them to live by the strength of the secret; they desire not to give men instruction in the nature of God, but rather to show men the way on which they can meet with God. And among these religious movements it is most particularly the third type of which I have spoken that is unconcerned about a universally valid knowledge of nature and command, and deeply concerned about the here and now of the human being, the ever new spring of the eternal truth. It is just for this reason that these movements can take over a system of universal dogmas and precepts from the stage of tradition which is contemporary with them; their own contribution cannot be codified, it is not the kind of material that lends itself to be embodied in a lasting science or set of obligations; it is only light to the seeing eye, strength to the labouring hand, ever appearing anew. This is particularly clearly demonstrated by Hasidism. What existed from of old is not of greatest importance to it, but what happens again and again; and again, not what happens to man, but what he does, and not the outstanding things he does, but the trivial things; and much more than what he does, how he does it. Among all movements of this kind none has surely more greatly than Hasidism proclaimed the infinite ethos of the moment.

Hasidism took over two traditions and united them without essentially adding anything to them beyond a new light and a new strength; they were, that tradition of religious commandments which is, next to the Vedic sacrificial teachings, the most gigantic construction of spiritual precepts—the ritual formation of Judaism; and that tradition of religious science which is second only to gnosis in image-making power, and superior to it in systematisation—the Kabbalah.

The two traditions were naturally in personal union with each other in the kabbalists, but they did not experience the full union of one reality of life and community, until they were taken up into Hasidism.

The union was brought about through the old-new *principle* which Hasidism presented, the principle of man's responsibility for God's fate in the world. Responsibility not in a conditioned, moral sense, but in an unconditioned, metaphysical sense, the secret, unfathomable value of human action, the influence of the man who acts on the destiny of the All, yes even on the powers that determine it—that is an age-old conception in Judaism. "The righteous enlarge the power of the upper dominion." There is a causality of action which is withdrawn from our experience, and which is only open to our dimmest foreboding.

Through the kabbalistic view of God's fate in the world this conception crystallised itself in the development of the Kabbalah into the central idea of Hasidism.

Mythically active in later forms of Iranian religious feeling, outlined in abstract thought in diverse kinds of gnosis, we perceive the conception of the God-soul imprisoned in the material world, from which it must be

liberated. The glory of light which radiates from God and has sunk into darkness, the *sophia* which has been delivered into the hands of the lower powers that rule the world, the "Mother" who must walk through all the sufferings of all existence—it is always the fate of a being mediating between original good and original evil which is told, a being who is exposed and yet a divine being, severed from its origin and yet not severed from it; for the severance is called time, and the union eternity. The Kabbalah has taken over the conception of the exiled God-soul, but it has recast it in the fire of the Jewish conception of unity, which excludes any original duality. The fate of God's glory, of "the indwelling," the Shekhinah, does not any longer come upon her from her adversary, from the power of matter alien or inimical to God, but from the necessity of the primal will itself; it belongs to the meaning of the creation.

How is world possible? That is the essential question for Kabbalah, as it was the essential question for all gnosis. How can world be, seeing that God is? Seeing that God is infinite, how can there be anything outside him? Seeing that he is eternal, how can time endure? Seeing that he is perfect, how could imperfection arise? Seeing that he is unconditioned, what is the conditioned for?

The Kabbalah\* answers: God contracted Himself into the world, because He Who was the unity free from all duality and relations willed to let relations emerge; because He willed to be known, loved, willed; because from His original oneness, in which thought and its object are one, He would let the otherness emanate, which strives towards unity.

\* I do not consider the development and transformation of the kabbalistic view here, but only the essential part of it which was decisive for Hasidism.

So the spheres radiated from Him, the spheres of separation, creation, formation, production; the worlds of ideas, of powers, of forms, of substances; the kingdoms of genius, of spirit, of soul, of life; so was formed in them the All, whose "place" God is, and whose centre He is. The meaning of the emanation is according to a hasidic saying "not, as the creatures wrongly think, that the upper world should be above the lower world, rather is the world of production that which appears to our corporeal eye; but if you fathom it more deeply, and if you unfold its corporeality, then this is even the world of formation, and if you unfold it further, then is it the world of creation, and if you still more deeply probe its nature, then is it the world of separation, right up to the Unlimited, blessed be He." The sensual world of space and time is only the outermost veil of God, the outermost and thickest "shell," therefore also called above all others "the world of shells." There is no evil in itself; the imperfect is only clasp and cover of a more perfect.

By this is not meant, however, that all world-existence is to be taken as mere appearance, but that it is to be regarded as a system of ever thicker coverings. And yet, it is just in this system that the fate of God takes place. God has not made a universe that experiences a fate, while He himself is without any fate; in so far as He Himself projected the Universe out of Himself, he clad Himself in it, dwells in it, He Himself in His Shekhinah has His own fate in the world.

But why were not the pure sphere of separation and the world of ideas sufficient for the primordial will? He who desired to be known could in these have been known face to face. Why had the first act to produce beyond these worlds

ever "lower," ever more distant, outer, more shell-covered realms, till it brought forth this world which cannot be more thickly covered than it is, this stubborn, troubled, burdened world in which we creatures, we things, have our dwelling? Why could we not remain genius, of the nature of luminiferous ether, why had we successively to be stained and interpenetrated by a spirit of the nature of fire, a soul of the nature of water, a corporeal life of the nature of earth?

To all such questions the Kabbalah answers only: God contracted Himself into the world. And it is answered. God would be known, loved, willed; that is, God wanted an independent otherness, which would be free in its knowing, free in its loving, free in its willing; *he set it free*. This is the meaning of *zimzum*, contraction. But this otherness, this power exempted from eternal being and left to its freedom, was limited in its freedom only by its own doing; it surged forth beyond its god-near purity. Becoming burst forth out of being, what the Kabbalah calls "the Mystery of the Splintering of the Vessels" took place. Sphere mounted out of sphere, world climbed away beyond world, shell shot from shell, until the extremity of transformations was reached; here in the kingdom of matter extended in space, persevering in time, on the edge of that which has become, in the uttermost border-land of sensual things, breaks the wave of God. The wave which breaks here is God's. As the light precipitated itself from the highest to the lowest spheres and shattered them, the sparks of light from the primordial being who lived in the immediate presence of God, from the genius-natured Adam Kadmon, sank into the imprisonment of things. God's Shekhinah descended from sphere to sphere, wandered from world to world, enveloped



itself with shell upon shell, until it was in its furthest exile—in us. In our world God's fate is being accomplished.

But our world is indeed the world of Man.

In ancient Indian religion we meet the myth of "The Universe-Sacrifice," the sacrifice of the primordial man out of whose parts the world has been created. The idea of the primordial being of human kind, who must perish or humble himself that the separation of the world may be achieved, returns again and again in the mystery-rites and cult-hymns, cosmogonies and apocalypses of the Near East. The Kabbalah posits at the beginning of creation the Adam Kadmon, the image of God and primal shape of the All, God's light his substance, God's name his life, the still brooding elements of the spheres his members, all contraries in him connected as right and left. The sundering of his parts is the becoming of the world; this too is sacrifice. But at their end, on the edge of that which has come into being, the effect of all the breaking and turmoil of the primordial light, the hypertrophy of all the spheres, all contraries fallen apart in him as male and female, stands again man, the combined work of the elements, this earthly, singled-out, called, metabolically changing, countlessly born and dead man. The otherness left to its freedom has worked itself out in him to its last drop, it has gathered itself in him, and he, the latest, most burdened, of created things has above them all received the full heritage of freedom. Here only, in this child of corruption and light, has the rightful subject of the act arisen, in which God wills to be known, loved, willed. Here is the movement at an end, from this point only can "the Jordan flow uphill." Here the decision takes place.

In other teachings the God-soul is sent from heaven to earth, or delivered over to the earth, and it can thus be called home or set free for its home, creation and redemption can take place from "above" to "below," in the same direction; not so in a teaching which, like the Jewish teaching, is so completely established on the double-sided relationship between the I of man and the Thou of God, on the reality of the mutual relationship, on the *meeting*. Here is man, this miserable man, in accordance with the original intention of his creation, God's helper. The world was created for the sake of "the chooser," for the sake of him who has the power to choose God. The shells of the world exist that he may break through them, into the core. The spheres have bent apart that he might draw them together. The creature waits for him. God waits for him. The impulse to redemption must proceed from him, from "below." Grace is God's *answer*.

None of the upper, inner worlds are fit to give the first impulse to the transformation into the *olam ha-tikkun*, the world of perfection, which "the Shekhinah steps out of the concealment," only this lowest and outermost world is fit for that. For God has contracted Himself to world, He has set the world in freedom; fate hangs now on the world's freedom. That is the mystery of man.

The history of the world is repeated in the history of man. That which has become free overreaches itself. To "the Splintering of the Vessels" corresponds "the Fall of Man." Both are signs of the necessary way. Within the cosmic exile of the Shekhinah lies the earthly exile, into which it was driven by the failure of man, and together

with him it goes out from Paradise into the wandering. The history of the world repeats itself yet once more in the history of Israel. Banishment follows time and again on Israel's falling away, not as a punishment, but as an effect; and the Shekhinah goes into banishment with Israel, until the last, where now, in deepest humiliation, "all depends on turning."

The Kabbalah accomplished this association of a cosmic conception with a historical conception from old Jewish traditions, and it certainly was conducive in making the standpoint of the emanational systems more direct and emotional; but at the same time the meaning and task of man became straitened. By confusing absolute and historical categories all eschatology is always in danger of sacrificing the eternal to the temporal; this happens all the more easily in an age where thought construction takes the place of eschatological vision. The goal is made finite, and so the means is made finite. If the inwardness of messianism, of the world's turning and the world's transformation, is forgotten, then a theurgical practice easily arises, which wants to bring about redemption by statutory procedures. This practice goes beyond itself in the vast exaggerations of asceticism, that in this form strain after the void; this is what marked the last, pre-hasidic phase of the Kabbalah, and whose after-effects stretched into Hasidism itself, but which was overcome by the latter's anti-ascetical tendency. In most cases a small scheme of redemption stands over against the great cosmogonic vision of the world-embracing primordial man.

In connection with the Kabbalah Hasidism strove to eradicate the schematisation of the mystery. The old-new principle which it represented is the principle of the cosmic

and meta-cosmic power and responsibility of man, which it brought forth again in a purified form. "All worlds hang on his works, all worlds look and yearn for the teaching and good deeds of man." Owing to the sheer intensity with which it held this principle, Hasidism became a religious *movement*; but the principle is no new doctrine, neither does Hasidism contain any new elements of doctrine. Through the suppression, but not extinction, of the multitudinous forms of magic violence, formulas of faith, and mystosophisms which clung to it, this principle became the centre of a mode of living and of a community. The eschatological urge did not die out, the demand for messianic redemption found sometimes a still more personal expression in magic-compelling words and stormy undertakings; but the work for the sake of the end—which an old saying bids us "not to hurry"—subordinated itself to the steady working on the inner world through the hallowing of all acts; in the stillness the conception ripened of a timeless salvation, which the moment discloses; the decisive factor was no longer a predetermined act, but the consecration of all acts; and as the secret of present fulfilment united itself with the secret of preparing for things to come, and thus made it stronger and more illuminating, from out of asceticism, as from out of a cast off chrysalis cocoon, fluttered the winged joy.

Hasidism wants to reveal "the God in this nethermost, lowest world, in all things, and specially in man, that there is no part and no movement of his in which the strength of God is not concealed, and none with which he cannot complete the unification." To the question of what service should come first the Baal-shem answered. "For the spiritual man the first service is, love without mortification; for others, to

learn to see that there is a holy life in everything corporeal, and that one can carry back all to this root, and hallow all."

There is no reason to fast, as he who eats with devotion redeems the fallen sparks enclosed in the food, and gives them smell and taste; even Haman was affected by the holiness of the meal, when he was Esther's guest, and it is said about Abraham that he stood "over" the angels whom he entertained, because he showed them the consecration of eating, which was unknown to them. There is no reason to do without love of husband or wife, for where a man and woman are together in holy unity, there the Shekhinah rests over them—as already the Talmud taught. After the death of his wife the Baal-shem would not allow himself to be comforted, and said, "I had hoped to journey to heaven in a thunderstorm like Elijah, but now it has been taken from me, for now I am after all only the half of one body." One shall not undertake mortification; "he who does harm to his body does harm to his soul," and ecstasy arising from ascetical practices comes "from the other side"; they are not of divine but of demonic character. One shall not kill "the evil impulse," the passion, in oneself, but one shall serve God *with it*; it is the power which is destined to receive its direction from man. "You have made the impulse evil," says God already in the Midrash to man; the "alien thoughts," the lusts which come to men, are pure ideas which were made corrupt in "the Splintering of the Vessels," and which now desire to be raised up again through man. "Even the noblest of bitterness touches despair, but the lowliest of joys grows out of holiness." One cannot reach the kernel of the fruit except through the shell. A zaddik quoted the word of a talmudic sage, "The ways of the firmament are

as light to me as the ways of the town of Nehardea," and turned it round, "The streets of the town should be as light to one as the paths of heaven; for 'one cannot come to God in any other way than through nature.'"

"Enoch was a cobbler; with each stitch of his awl that drew together the top and bottom leather, he joined God and His Shekhinah." Hasidic teaching loved to vary this strange contribution to the legend of the patriarch, who was favoured with divine companionship, and was taken away from this earth to undergo the transformation into Metatron with his demiurgic powers, the fire-bodied "Prince of the Countenance." For the legend expresses by its image, which keeps so close to the earth, what is the essential point to Hasidism, that man exerts influence on the eternal, and that this is not done by any special works, but by the intention with which he does all his works. It is the teaching of the hallowing of the everyday. The issue is not to attain to a new type of acting which, owing to its object, would be sacred or mystical; the issue is to do the one appointed task, the common, obvious tasks of daily life, according to their truth and according to their meaning. One's works are shells too; he who finishes his work rightly, hallowing it, encompasses in its core the limitless.

From this it becomes clear that Hasidism had no impulse to tear out any part of the structure of traditional Law, for, according to hasidic teaching, nothing can exist which cannot be filled with intention, or whose intention cannot be discovered. But it also becomes clear how just by this the force of inertia secretly remained stronger than the moving and renewing force, and finally inside Hasidism

itself necessarily overcame it; it is only the old story that in the world of men the shell ever prevails over the kernel.

Even apart from that, no teaching finds it so hard to preserve its pure strength as one which places the meaning of life in the effective reality of the here and now, and which does not suffer men to seek refuge from the exacting infinity of the moment in an equally accepted system of being and obligation; the force of inertia always proves itself the stronger, and compels the teaching to recant. But during the short time of its purity the teaching has begotten an undying fullness of the true and generous life.

## *II Body*

A teaching which sets the winged "How" of an act high above the codified "What" is not able to hand down its substance in writing; it is again and again transmitted by life, from leader to followers, but especially from master to disciple. It is not as if the teaching were divided into one part which was open to all, and into another part of esoteric teaching; it would go against its own purpose, the work on man, if it harboured a secret drawer with a hieratic inscription. It is rather that while the secret which is handed down is exactly the same as that which the enduring word proclaims, its nature as a "How" prevents it from being more than indicated by the word; the substance of its truth can only be revealed by making it true in human life.

Hence "a hidden zaddik" said about the rabbis who "speak Torah," that is, who interpret the Scriptures, "What is the sense of their speaking Torah? Man should act in

such a way that all his behaviour is a Torah, and he himself is a Torah." And at another place it is said, "The aim of the wise man is to make himself into a perfect teaching, and all his acts bodies of instruction; and where it is not vouchsafed him to attain to this, his aim is to be a transmission of the teaching and a commentary on it, and to spread the teaching by each of his movements." It comes as a sacramental expression of this fundamental insight when the Zaddik of Apt picks up the belt which the seventeen year old Rabbi Israel, the later Rishiner, had dropped, buckles it on for him saying that he completes the holy act of the *gelilah*, the rolling up of the Torah-scroll.

The men who are truly a Torah are called zaddiks, the righteous, the right ones. They are the bearers of hasidic teaching, not only as its apostles, but more as its effective reality. They are the teaching.

In order to understand the particular significance of the zaddik, as distinct for instance from that of the Russian staretz as he has been presented with the transforming fidelity of a great poet, by Dostoevski, it is necessary to remember the fundamental difference between the historical conceptions of Judaism and Christianity (or one of the other religions centering in a saviour, such as Buddhism for example). It is not the conception of redemption itself which is the dividing factor; that existed already in the messianism of the prophets, and post-exilic Judaism elaborated it as the central theme of its conception of the world. But in the saviour-religions the redemption is a fact which, even while it transcends history, as it must according to its nature, yet also is a fixed point localised in history; for Judaism redemption is not a fact, but pure prospect. For



Christianity historical time, "the present aeon," has a caesura, an absolute middle-point, where it, as it were, breaks open so violently that it becomes split from top to bottom, and just by doing this it obtains its unshakable hold. For Judaism, on the other hand, historical time must run to its "end" without such a central mooring point, completely left to its never-ceasing flowing. Finality has in this way intervened in Christianity, as in Buddhism, and it can from now on only be "imitated," only be renewed by accession; it can only be re-enacted. In Judaism finality intervenes at all times, that is, it intervenes here and now. Before the glowing plenitude of fate given by the here and now even the horizon of "the last things" is apparently drained of its colour before our eyes; the Kingdom of God projected on to time appears on the horizon of the absolute future, where heaven and earth meet; but timelessly it reveals itself ever and again in the moment where truly human beings act with the whole of their nature, and thus unite God and his Shekhinah. It is true it was a Christian, western man of vision who confronted his Church with the statement, "The noble man is that only-begotten son of God whom the Father eternally engenders"; \* but in none of the Christian heretical communities which wanted to be in earnest with this point of view could it grow into an unequivocal life. In Hasidism arose the parallel saying of Judaism, weak and condemned to distortion from its beginning, but enduring in its reality, in which the place of engenderment, is taken by the never-ceasing stream of the down-flowing grace, by the meeting of divine and human work, but where through

\* One of the propositions of Eckhart's which was condemned by the Pope in 1329.

the human work the word "eternally" rings with equal strength.

The zaddik is neither a priest nor a monk, who renews in himself an act of salvation finished once and for all, or who mediates this act of salvation to the community; the zaddik is the man who is more intent than other men on putting his hand to the task of salvation, which is common to all human beings and all times, and whose powers, purified and united, are turned to the one duty. He is, as far as the conception of him goes, the man in whom the metaphysical responsibility of human beings steps out from mere consciousness and takes on organic existence. He is the man who has become truly human, the rightful subject of the act in which God wills to be known, loved, willed. In him the "lower," earthly man makes real and actual his primal image, the image of the cosmic archetype-man who encompasses the spheres. He is the turning of the great flood, in him the world turns back towards its fountain-head. He is "no servant of time, but above her." He carries the blessing from below to the upper realms, and the upper blessing to the lower realms; he draws the Holy Spirit down over mankind. The existence of the zaddik has its influence in the upper realms. As one zaddik said about another in a joking way which is as hearty as it is clear, "He must boil the huge pots at his fire." From him does the world take its renewal, he is its "foundation"; this is the interpretation given of Solomon's saying about "the righteous" in *Proverbs*, 10.25, "The zaddik is called foundation, because he ceaselessly causes the outpouring of abundance over the world with his work. And if it perfects itself from him so that the aim of all his acts is now only to unite God with his Shekhinah, then

a stream of grace comes over his soul from the divine abundance which flows from the light of the One God, and he becomes like a new creature, and like a newborn babe. This is what is written, 'Unto Shem, also was born he . . .'\* For he whose every work is for God, he begets himself in the renewal of the light in his soul."

A truly human being is of more importance than an angel, as the angel is "one who stands," but he is "one who walks"; he walks on, penetrates through, ascends up—he performs the decisive, renewing movement of the world. The constant renewal is the guiding principle of the zaddik's life. In him the preceding becoming of creation gathers itself and raises itself to its creative meaning, the true one which is quite free from self-will and self-seeking, which indeed is nothing less than the turning back of creation to its creator. The zaddik sees continually the bodily renewal in the all directly, and is "in each moment moved by the renewal of the creature"; his nature answers with the renewal of the spirit. And as the bodily renewal in nature is always connected with a submersion, a dissolution, a sleep of the elements, so there is no true spiritual becoming without extinction. "For the zaddikim," says Rabbi Susya, "who in their service ever go from temple to temple, and from world to world, must first of all throw their life from them that they may receive a new spirit, so that a new inspiration ever can overshadow them; and this is the mystery of sleep." The symbolic act of this deeply inward event is the immersion. Primeval symbol of re-birth, which is only genuine when it includes death and resurrection, it was taken up into kabbalistic practice from old traditions, especially from

\* Interpreting *Genesis*, 10. 21.

those of the Essenes and the "morning-baptists," and was practised by the zaddikim with a profound and joyful eagerness which has no asceticism in it. It is told of many of the zaddikim how they broke the ice on the streams in the heavy winter-frosts to be able to immerse themselves in running water; the meaning of this fervour is shown by the words of a hasid who said that the spiritual act of "the laying aside of all bodyliness" could be substituted for immersion. What here finds expression by the action is readiness and preparedness to enter into "the state of nothing" in which alone the divine renewal can work itself out.

In this ever new exercise of "the receptive power" of the zaddik is completed the ever new consecration of his active power. Armed with renewed strength he returns again to his work—his daily work, to the thousandfold work of "unification," of the *yihud*.

*Yihud* means primarily the proclamation of the unity of God, which is for the Jew the central sun not only in his religious system, but also in the whole system of his life. This proclamation represents, however, not a passive acknowledgment, but an act. It is in no way the statement of a subject about an object; it is not at all anything "subjective," it is something subjective-objective, it is the one act of meeting, it is the dynamic form of the divine unity itself. This active character of the *yihud* grew in strength in the Kabbalah, and came to its own in Hasidism. Man produces the unity of God; this means that the unity of becoming, God's unity in creation, is accomplished through him; in its nature this unity can admittedly only be a unification of that which has separated itself originally, a unification which overarches the lasting state of separation, and in which the

original unity of the undivided being finds its cosmic counterpart: the unity without multiplicity in the unification of multiplicity.

It is of basic importance to contrast the characteristic conception of the yihud with magic action. The magic act implies the influence of a subject on an object, that of the man versed in magic on a power that may be divine or demonic, personal or impersonal, appearing in the world of things or hiding behind it; hence it implies a constitutive duality of elements in which the one element, the human, is essentially the weaker, but in virtue of its magic power it becomes the stronger element which can exert compulsion on the other; it forces the other element, be this divine or demonic, to serve man, to fulfil man's purpose, to work for man; man, from whom the act springs, is also its goal and end; the magic act forms a causal process which is isolated, circular, and turns back into itself. The yihud does not imply the influence of a subject on an object, but rather that something of objective works itself out in and through something subjective, that being works itself out in and through becoming. This is a true, strict, and complete working out, so that the becoming is not a tool that is being moved hither and thither, but a mover which is released, free, working in its own freedom. World history is not a game played by God; it is God's fate. The yihud means the ever-new binding together of the spheres that strive to be apart, the ever-new marrying of "majesty" and "kingdom"—through man. The divine element which lives in man moves from him to serve God, to do God's purpose, to work for God. The free yihud is done in God's name and in accordance with His command when He created the world, and He Himself is

its goal and end; the *hiyud* does not turn back into itself, it turns back into God; it is not isolated, but is interwoven with the world process; it is no circle, but the swinging back of the power of God which He sent forth.

From this distinction between them it is clear why magic must include a qualitatively particular action which has to bring forth the particular effect, why it must include gestures and speeches of a special kind, alien to other men and other moments, while *yihud*, on the other hand, has no particular formula and procedure, but, on the contrary, is nothing else than the ordinary life of human beings, only gathered together and directed towards its goal of union. It is true that Hasidism has taken up and practised much of kabbalistic tradition, such as the secret of the letters of the alphabet, the twisting round and joining together of the names of God in its system of "*kavvanoth*," of intentions; but this magical part has never touched the centre of hasidic teaching. In this centre there is no secret formula, but the hallowing of everything; nothing which is done can be condemned to remain profane on account of its nature; each act becomes divine service and divine work when it is directed towards the union, that is, when the union becomes revealed in its inner consecration. The life of the *zaddik* is carried by this all-penetrating power of the *yihud*.

It is told of the *Zaddik* of Berditchew that while he was still young he was once staying with his friend, the Rabbi of Nikolsburg, and that while he was staying with him, he caused general offence, because he went into the kitchen dressed in his prayer shawl and with the double phylacteries on his forehead, and asked after the preparation of the food; and also because he would enter into talk with the

most worldly man about all kinds of apparently idle things, even in the house of prayer; that was profanation of the sacred garments, profanation of the sacred place, profanation of the sacred hour, and it was as such thrown up against him. But the Master said, "What it is only in my power to do for three hours during the day, this man is able to do all day long, he can keep his mind collected, so that he establishes sublime unions also by the talk that is counted for idle." The central desire of the zaddik is to hallow that which is worldly. His meal is a sacrifice, his table an altar. All his ways lead to redemption. It is told about one zaddik that when he was young he went day in and day out round the villages and traded with the peasants; and again and again when he came home and said the afternoon prayer, he felt that a blessed fire coursed through all his body; he asked his elder brother, who was also his teacher, what that was, for he was afraid that it might emanate from that which is evil, and that his service was untrue; his brother answered, "When you walk across the fields with your mind pure and holy, then from all the stones, and all growing things, and all animals, the sparks of their soul come out and cling to you, and then they are purified and become a holy fire in you."

This hallowing of the everyday stands above all magic. The prayerbook of Rabbi Yizhak Lurya, the master of the theurgical Kabbalah, was published in the days of Rabbi Pinhas of Korez; this prayerbook was entirely built on letter-kavanoth, and the disciples of the Zaddik asked for his permission to use it for their prayers; but after some time they came back to him and complained that since they had begun to use the prayerbook, they had suffered a great

loss of vitality in their prayer. Rabbi Pinhas answered them, "You have locked up all your strength and all the striving of your thoughts towards the goal in the kavvanoth on the holy name and the letter monograms and have turned away from the essential thing, to make your heart whole and unite it with God; therefore have you lost the life and feeling of holiness." All formulae and artifices are patch-work, the true union rises above them all. "He who uses in his prayer all the kavvanoth which he knows," says the Baalshem, "he produces only that which he knows. But he who speaks the word in close connectedness, for him all kavvanah enters of itself into each word." What can be learnt does not matter; what matters is the self-abandonment to that which is not known.

A zaddik said, "Note well that the word Kabbalah comes from kabbel, to take up, and the word kavvanah comes from kavven, to direct. For the ultimate meaning of all the wisdom of the Kabbalah is to take upon oneself the yoke of the Kingdom of God; and the ultimate meaning of all the skill of the Kavvanoth is to direct one's heart to God. When a man says, 'God is mine and I am His' how is it that his soul does not part from his body?" As soon as he had said this, he fell into a deep swoon, from which he was only called back with great difficulty.

Here it becomes clear that yihud means a venture, the one venture. The unification of God must happen in the world, man must produce the unification of God by unifying himself; what belongs to man, worldly welfare, understanding, life on this earth, must be ventured on the divine. This shows itself most powerfully in prayer. It is told of a zaddik



that every day, before he went to the house of prayer, he arranged his home as if he were going to die. Another zaddik taught his disciples how they should pray, "He who says the word 'Lord' and at the same time also has in his mind to say the words 'of the world,' that is no way of speaking. But while he says 'Lord,' he should in his mind completely relinquish himself to the Lord, even if his soul has to go out into the Lord, and even if he will not any more pronounce the word 'world,' and must be satisfied that he could say 'Lord.' This is the nature of prayer." The Baal-shem has likened the ecstatic movements of the hasid who prays with the whole of his body to the movements of a drowning man.

What was already told of individual masters of the Talmud is also being told of some of the zaddikim, how the rapture of prayer ruled their bodies mightily and carried them away to movements which went far beyond what is customary in the world of humanity. In such moments there was round some of them a remoteness as that round a holy maniac. But all this is only an incident happening on the doorstep, and not what takes place in the hall; it is the struggling venture, and not the fulfilment. Rabbi Yehudah Loeb tells us how once in the bower at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles he saw the great Zaddik of Lublin move as if driven by a secret terror before the benediction; all the people gazed at it, and were themselves thrown into quivering fear; Rabbi Yehudah Loeb, however, remained sitting and waited till the time of the benediction; then he arose, looked at the now motionless, uplifted Master, and listened to the divine benediction; thus had Moses once not heeded

the clap of thunder and the smoking mountain round which the people stood tremblingly, and had drawn near to the motionless cloud.

The less premeditated the prayer is, the more spontaneously it wells forth from the natural deep in man, from the cosmic impulse of him who carries the likeness of the sphere-encompassing primordial man, so much the more real is it. It is emphasised about a disciple's disciple of the Zaddik of Lublin, Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk, that he prayed without any effort and strain, as one who talks with his companion, and yet was transformed after the prayer as if he came out of another world, and scarcely recognised his own; "for the nature of the talk issues from the root of the soul without any intention; like one whose soul is occupied with a very profound subject sometimes lets words come out of his mouth which are spoken between him and himself without any intention, and he himself knows nothing of his speech, and all this, because it issues from the root of the soul, and the whole soul is enwrapped in the speech, which rises in perfect unity." Here, in true prayer, appears the original meaning of the yihud in its purest form, and shows that it is no "subjective" event, but that it is the dynamic form of the very unity of God. "The people think," said Rabbi Pinhas of Korez, "that they pray before God. But it is not so. For the prayer itself is the essence of the Godhead."

Of this kind is the lonely service of the zaddik. But he is not a true zaddik, who remains satisfied with this. The bond of God and man preserves and fulfils itself in the world of man.

Rabbi Hayim of Zans was once after the minhah prayer

troubled by an importunate person with a certain request. As the man would not desist, the Zaddik became rude to him. When he was asked by a friend, who was present at the scene, why he had been in such a rage, he answered that he who says *minhah* stands face to face with the world of the original "separation," how should he not be angry when he comes from this, and then becomes besieged with small troubles of small people. To that the other said, "After Scripture has told of the first revelation of God on Sinai to Moses, it says, 'Moses went down from the mount to the people.' Rashi comments on this, 'This teaches us that Moses did not turn from the mountain to his business, but to the people.' How is this to be understood? What kind of business had Moses in the desert from which he desisted in order to go to the people? It is to be understood thus: As Moses descended the mountain, he still cleaved to the upper worlds and completed his great work on them, interpenetrating the sphere of judgment with the element of mercy. This was Moses' business. And yet, as he stepped down to the people, he ceased from his great work, made himself free from the upper worlds and turned himself to the people; he listened to all their small troubles, laid all the heaviness of the hearts of all Israel on his own, and then carried it up in prayer.'" When Rabbi Hayim heard this, his mind became calm and clear, he called back again the man to whom he had spoken so harshly, so that he might be apprised of his request, and almost throughout the whole night he received the complaints and petitions of the hasidim gathered there.

"Upper" and "lower"—the determining importance belongs to the "lower." Here on the edge of that which has

come into being is the fate of the aeons decided. The world of man is the world of trial.

"Be not bad with yourself," that means, do not think that you cannot be redeemed, it is written in *The Sayings of the Fathers*. But Rabbi Baruch, the grandson of the Baalshem, interpreted the saying differently, "Each man is called to bring something in the world to its completion. Each one is needed by the world. But there are people who always sit and learn, shut in their room, and who do not go out of the house to talk with other people; for this reason they are called bad people. For if they talked with others, they would bring something of that which was appointed for them to completion. This is what it means, 'be not bad with yourself'; what is meant is that you spend your time sitting alone with yourself and do not go out among the people; be not bad through loneliness."

Human love is not the fulfilment of a commandment coming from outside this world; it is work on the completion, it helps to bring the form of the Shekhinah out of its hiddenness, it works on the "chariot," on the cosmic bearer of the liberated glory. It is written of this, "Love thy neighbour as thyself, *I am 'He Who is there.'*" On love does the Kingdom establish itself.

"When a man sees that his neighbour hates him," said Rabbi Raphael of Bershad, "then he must love him more than he did before to fill up what is lacking. For the unity of love of all people is the chariot of the Shekhinah, and each jolt and crack in it hinders its rise from out of the shells." Therefore Rabbi Raphael used always to warn against applying the measuring-rod in one's dealings with people: A

surplus of love is necessary to fill up what is lacking of love in this world.

There are three circles on which the love of the zaddik stands the test.

The first and widest circle includes all the many people who come from afar to the zaddik; they come most often at the time of the high holydays, partly to spend some days near the zaddik, "in the shadow of his holiness," partly to obtain help from him in their distress of body or soul. In these pilgrims there is something of the loyal and trustful spirit with which the people of Palestine once used to go up to the Temple in Jerusalem three times a year to offer their sacrifice in order to free themselves from evil and to join themselves to the divine; "the Zaddik takes the place of the altar." It must be admitted that the slips of paper with requests, which the travellers hand in, contain mostly a list of quite exterior wants and physical illnesses; but their healing stirs the innermost depths and moves them so that new life wells up. The two conceptions of "wonder" and "suggestion" go only a very little way towards helping us to understand the general character of the phenomenon which underlies this peculiar effect the zaddik had, an effect whose existence cannot be contested. "Wonder" makes the irrationality of the phenomenon vanish into thin air, "suggestion" makes its rationalisation fall flat on the earth; to try to pronounce it to be an influence of the divine on the human gives a much too vague point of view, as it would give a much too narrow point of view to pronounce it to be an influence of the "stronger" will on the "weaker" will. One

may obtain a right perspective to begin with, if one remembers that the relation of a soul to its organic life depends on the degree of wholeness and unity attained by the soul; the more dissociated the soul is, so much the more is it at the mercy of the organic life; the more unified it is in itself so much the more is it the master of its physical ailments and attacks; not as if it vanquished the body, but because through its unity it ever saves and guards the unity of the body. Suddenly and unmistakably does this power rule where a shattered soul in a supreme moment is gathered together and is made whole. The "healing," which hitherto has grown only in the fruitful darkness of the depth of the soul, is suddenly completed in the sight of all. Through nothing else can this process be effected so simply and immediately as through the psycho-synthetic appearance of a whole, unified soul, which lays hold of the shattered soul, agitates it on all sides, and hastens the event of crystallisation. The unified soul does not use suggestion, she shapes a resting-place and a centre in the soul which has called out to her; and she does this the more truly and perfectly the more she takes care that the soul which has called out to her does not remain dependent upon her. The helper establishes a resting-place and a centre not in so far as he places his own image in the soul which has to be formed anew, but in so far as he lets her see through him, as through a glass, the essence of all things, and then lets her uncover that essence in herself, and lets her appropriate it as the core of the living unity. Only the greatest among the zaddikim have accomplished this task; they stand among the helpers of God.

The second, middle, circle includes those who live in the neighbourhood of the zaddik. These usually represent

only a part of the Jews of the neighbourhood, the rest are "adversaries," *mitnagdim*, and those who are indifferent; their official, spiritual leader is the "rav"; within this group, being a "compulsory community," stands the hasidic group as a free group, a "community of choice," with the zaddik, the "rebbe" (rabbi) at its head, although some zaddikim, who lived in a place where Hasidism prevailed, also exercised the functions of the rav, and carried his title. This difference between the two groups shows the difference in the legal status of the rav and the rebbe. The rav qualified for his position by his proved knowledge of the Law in its talmudic roots, and in the whole fullness of its rabbinic ramifications; the rebbe, on the other hand, qualified for his position by his spontaneously acknowledged leadership of souls, the depth of his "fear of God," that is, the central feeling of God's presence, and the fervour of his "heart's service," that is, the shaping of his whole life into an active prayer. By this, however, it is by no means to be understood that the latter group of characteristics was only to be found among the zaddikim, and not also among the rabbis, just as little as it can be taken that many of the zaddikim had not an extensive and independently constructive knowledge of halakhah (Law). The greatest of the opponents of Hasidism, Rabbi Eliahu of Vilna, the "Gaon," was an exponent of the book *Zohar*, the cornerstone of the Kabbalah, and the greatest systematiser of Hasidism, Rabbi Shnëur Sal-man, was the author of a codex of ritual laws; and when one puts side by side the two life-histories as they have come down to us, then it is not the second but the first which has the more mystical-legendary character. One must guard oneself against taking the antithesis, which inevitably arises in

any consideration of the inner history, in a pragmatic instead of in a dialectic sense; the movement of the spirit takes place in the form of contradiction, but it does not embody itself in it. With this qualification the hasidic community can be considered as the social presentation of the principle of voluntariness, and the zaddik as representative of autonomous leadership. The strongest manifestation of both, and of their unity, is the common prayer; it is the ever returning, yet ever new symbolic act of the union between the zaddik and the community. The oppressive, crowded room of the beth ha-midrash,\* where overnight the poor travellers sleep, and where in the early morning the keen Talmud disputations resound, breathes now the air of the mystery. Even in the places where the zaddik prays in a separate room is he united with his community into a corporate body.

The third and narrowest circle consists of the disciples, of whom some were usually taken into the household of the zaddik. This is the real place of tradition, the imparting of the teaching from generation to generation.

Each of the three circles has its unity in virtue of the interaction between it and the zaddik. About the "travellers" Rabbi Pinhas says, "Often when some one comes to me to ask advice, I hear how he himself gives the answer." The Baalshem has likened the community, especially at prayer, to a bird's nest which one sets several people to bring down from the top of a very tall tree; one person is placed standing on the shoulders of the one below, he himself stands topmost; and what would happen if even one of the human pillar thought that it took too long to get the nest! But

\* Common prayer-house and house of study.



the power of interaction is most fully shown in the third circle.

In a town not far from that in which Rabbi Nahum Tchernobil lived, some of his disciples were once sitting at "the farewell meal of the Queen," which once more gathers the devout together before the Sabbath is ushered out; and as they were sitting, they spoke of the account which the soul has to give of itself in its deepest self-reflection. Then it came over them in their fear and humility that it seemed to them as if the life of them all was thrown away and squandered, and they said to each other that there would be no hope for them any more were it not that it comforted them and gave them confidence that they were allowed to join themselves to the great zaddik, Rabbi Nahum. Then they all arose, driven by a common desire, and set forth on the way to Tchernobil. At the same time as this was happening, Rabbi Nahum was sitting in his house, giving account of his soul. Then it seemed also to him in his fear and humility as if his life were thrown away and squandered, and that all his confidence came from only this one thing that these eager men had joined themselves to him. He went to the door, and looked towards the dwelling-place of the disciples; and when he had been standing there for a time, he saw them coming. "In this moment," added the zaddik, when he told of the event, "did the circle close."

As here the mutual value for each other finds its expression, so we see in another story the mutual influence expressed. On one of the days of self-examination between the New Year and the Day of Atonement Rabbi Susya was sitting in his chair, and the hasidim stood round him from morning till night. He had raised heart and eye to heaven,

and released himself from all corporeal bonds. Looking at him there awoke in one of the disciples the desire for repentance, and he began to weep profusely; and as a live coal makes its neighbours begin to kindle, so the flame of repentance alighted on disciple after disciple. Then the Zaddik looked round and looked at them all. Again he lifted his eyes, and spoke to God, saying, "Truly, Lord of the world, it is the right time to turn onto Thee; but Thou knowest well that I have not the strength to do penance—therefore accept my love and my shame as penance." It is this kind of influence which I have pointed to as that handing on of the secret which is above words.

Again and again it says in the hasidic writings that one should learn "from all the members of the zaddik." The purifying and renewing influence comes above all from the spontaneity of his existence; the consciously thought out utterances, especially those in verbal form, are only an accompaniment. In the verbal utterances too the essence of spontaneity is the determining factor.

"Make me a place of sacrifice from the earth of the field . . ." it says in Scripture, "but if you make me a stone place of sacrifice, build it not of fashioned stone, for if you have swung your iron over it, then you have profaned it." The altar of earth, thus the Rishiner interprets, that is the one which pleases God above all, the altar of silence; if, however, you make your altar out of words, then do not fashion them.

The zaddik shuns the "beautiful," the premeditated human speech. A learned man who was once a Sabbath-day guest at the table of Rabbi Baruch said to him, "Let us now hear words of teaching, you speak so beautifully." "Before I

speak beautifully, may I become dumb," said the Baalshem's grandson. And he said no more.

At the holiest of the Sabbath-day meals, "the third meal," the zaddik expounds the teaching, mostly only sparingly and fitfully, again and again breaking into it with silent meditation; a soft song, pulsating with the life of the mystery, goes before, an enraptured anthem follows. As often as the silence enters the darkening room, it brings an echo of eternity.

The three circles on which the love of the zaddik is standing the test, the coming and going crowd of those who seek his help, the community which is bound together by place and living conditions, the strong ring of souls formed by the disciples, all these indicate the various moving forces of which the vitality of the hasidic movement was built up. Its spiritual structure was founded on the handing down of the core of the teaching from master to disciple, but not as if something was transmitted to them, which was not also open to all; only, in the presence of the master, in the natural working of his being, the inexpressible "How" fluttered free and descended on them creatively. But even the same thing, only in an uncondensed and confused form, imparted itself to the people in the words of advice and teaching, and was developed in the customs and brotherly life of the community. This absence of grading in its province of teaching, this its anti-hierarchical position secured Hasidism its power over the people. It did not take away from outside the prime place given to possessions, but made them of no value from inside by linking together rich and poor in a community of mutual material and spiritual help, a community of love,

in which all members are equal before God and the zaddik; in the same way it also overcame, and in its highest moments fully overcame, the far stronger precedence given to learning, to Talmudic as well as to Kabbalistic learning. The "spiritual" man, the man who works with his brain, is not as such nearer the divine, indeed so long as he does not unify the manifoldness of his life, which lends itself to different interpretations, and so long as he has not subdued the violence of his labour to calmness, he may be further from the divine than "the simple man," who was already despised in the Talmudic era, the "am ha-aretz" (literally, countryman), who with peasant trustfulness leaves his cause to heaven.

The combination of purity of teaching and popular character is made possible by the fundamental principle of the hasidic teaching, the hallowing of all that belongs to this world. There is within this world no gulf between higher and lower human beings; to each is the highest open, each life has its entrance to reality, each kind of man has his eternal right, from each thing does a way lead to God, and each way that leads to God is *the* way.

So long as the combination of purity of teaching and popular character, of immediate transmission and a structure open to all, lasted, Hasidism was great and fruitful. Their disintegration meant its dissolution.

## Spinoza, Sabbatai Zevi, and the Baalshem

TWENTY-THREE years before the Baalshem was born, two famous Jews died within a short time of each other; both of them had ceased to be members of the Jewish community, the philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, because he had been excommunicated by the Synagogue, the "Messiah," Sabbatai Zevi, because he had seceded to Islam. Both of these men mark a late-exilic catastrophe within Jewry; the thought and writings of Spinoza bear witness to a spiritual upheaval and its influence on the Gentile world; the work of Sabbatai Zevi shows a rupture within the life and inner structure of the community itself. Although from the point of view of history Spinoza has had no important influence on Jewry, he yet belongs essentially to this historical cycle. Just as Sabbatai Zevi's secession to Islam indicates the historical questioning of the Jewish doctrine of the Messiah, so Spinoza's teaching voices the historical questioning of the Jewish conception of God. Thus both men terminate a process which flowed from one historical event, namely, that of the appearance of Jesus; and both men receive their answer and correction from a new process which sprang from one historical event, namely, that of the appearance of the Baalshem.

The great achievement of Israel is not so much that it has told mankind of the one, real God, the origin and goal of all that exists, but rather that it has taught men that they can address this God in very reality, that men can say *Thou* to Him, that we human beings can stand face to face with Him, that there is communion between God and man. It is true that wherever man is found, there prayer is also found, and so it has been from the dawn of time; but it was only Israel, which conceived life itself as a being spoken to and giving answer, as speaking to and receiving answer, and which lived out this conception in the actual terms of living. It is true that at all stages of human development mystery cults have professed to lead men to communion with the deity; but the more intimate the communion was said to be, the more it was a pretence. Here, as everywhere else where we are invited to participate in exceptional conditions and not in the lived life of the every day, we find that the god who is discovered is only the human image of a partial manifestation of the real God, He who is the origin and goal of all that exists.

God, in all actual fact, as speaker, the creation as the language, the call into Nothing and the answer of things through their emergence, the language of creation continued in the life of each created substance, the life of each creature a dialogue, the world as word—to proclaim that was Israel's task. Israel taught and showed: The real God is the God who can be spoken to, because He is the one who speaks to men.

Jesus—though not the actual man Jesus, but the image of Jesus as it has arisen in the souls of men and changed them—leaves God open to human address only in conjunc-

tion with himself, the Christ; the human word can only penetrate to Him Who is the origin and goal of all being, when it is carried by the Christ as by the Logos; the "way" to the Father is only through Him. It was with this modification that the Gentiles received Israel's teaching about the God that is open to human address. Thus it came about that they learned to speak not to God, but to Christ.

Spinoza undertook to deprive God of being open to human address. By this is not to be understood that his *deus sive natura* was another God. He himself meant none other than the God to whom he had spoken when he was a boy, the same God who is the origin and goal of all that exists. Spinoza wanted only to purify him from the stain of being open to human address. That which could be spoken to was not pure, not great, not divine enough for him. Spinoza's fundamental mistake was that he imagined the teaching of Israel to mean that God is a person; and he turned against this as a lessening of the Godhead. But the truth of the teaching lies in its insistence that God is *also* a person; and that stands over against all impersonal, unapproachable "purity" on the part of God as a heightening of the Godhead. Solomon, who built the Temple, knew that God shows himself in light, but dwells in darkness, that all the heavens cannot contain him, but that yet he has chosen for himself a house among those who speak to him; that thus he is both person and non-person, as much the limitless and the nameless as the father who has taught his children to speak familiarly with him. Spinoza knows only of the alternative, person or non-person; he then overthrows person, as if it were an idol, and proclaims the uncreated

substance Whom it would be folly or bad poetry to address as Thou.

However little late-exilic Jewry heard about him, something from Judaism had been brought about in the Gentile world, and what was brought about cannot be separated from its origin. Through Christianity, in however modified a form, something had penetrated into the Gentile world from the innermost being of Israel; it is extremely significant that only a Jew could show how to take it away again; a Jew has done that. Spinoza helped the minds of the spiritual among the Gentiles to set themselves free from what had been grafted on to them. Spinoza decisively accelerated the tendency of the western mind to live a life of soliloquy—and with that he precipitated the whole spiritual crisis; for the spirit withers gloriously in the air of the monologue.

Presumably the Baalshem knew nothing about Spinoza; but that does not prevent the Baalshem from giving him his answer. In true history a man can answer, though he has not heard; he does not intend to give an answer by what he says, but it is an answer nevertheless. It does not make the Baalshem's answer of less importance that it did not reach the minds of those who heard Spinoza's word; for in true history even what remains unknown can be valid.

In order to make clear how it comes about that the hasidic message has this character of answer, I shall have to refer to one of the fundamental tenets of Spinoza's teaching; a tenet which is closely associated with his attempt to "purify" God, although it seems to belong to a still deeper level of the soul than that from which this "purifying" arose.

The real communion of man with God has not only its



place in the world, but also its object. God speaks to man in the things and beings which he sends him in life. Man answers through his dealings with these things and beings. All specific "divine service" is in itself only the ever-renewed preparation for and hallowing of this communion with God in the world. But it is the ancient danger, perhaps it is the utmost danger and temptation of man, that something comes to be taken away and isolated from the human side; what has been taken away then becomes independent, rounded off and completed till it looks as if it were interchangeable with the whole from which it sprang; and then it is substituted for the real communion. The principal danger of man is "religion." It may be the forms by which man hallows the world for God that become independent, what we call the "cult-sacramental" forms; then they cease to embody the consecration of the lived, everyday life, and become instead the means of its separation from God; life in the world and divine service run on unapproachably parallel lines. But the "God" of this service is no longer God, it is only a semblance, the real partner in the communion is no longer there, the worshipper gesticulates into the empty air. Or, it may be the state of soul accompanying the divine service that becomes independent, the devotion, the reaching-out, the absorption-in, the rapture; that which was meant to and intended to lead unto a confirmation in the fullness of life, becomes instead detached from life; the soul wants to deal only with God; it is as if it desired to exercise its love for him on him alone, and not on his world. Now, the soul thinks, the world has disappeared; it is no longer standing between it and God. But with the world God Himself has disappeared, and only it alone, the soul, is left. What it

now calls God is only a figment in the soul itself, the dialogue which it thinks she is carrying on is only a monologue with divided roles, for the real partner in the communion is no longer there.

Spinoza lived at a time when the soul's and the cult's becoming independent again joined each other. When the western world became aware of its estrangement from God, it did not seek to turn its worldly life towards God; instead it tried to unite itself with him by returning to him in mystical and sacramental exaltation, leaving the world outside. The movement overflowed into art, and there it crystallised itself into that appealing fictitious character which we call Baroque. From the whole of Spinoza's mental and spiritual attitude it is obvious that to him it was this pretence at a communion which constituted the really impure. Not outside the world, rather only in the world itself, can man find the divine. It is this thesis which Spinoza sets in opposition to that dualism of life which had become current in his time. In doing so Spinoza acts on a primal Jewish instinct; it is the very same instinct which once made the prophets protest against the sacrificial cult that had become independent. But Spinoza's attack goes beyond its legitimate object; not only does the communion with God held apart from the world become unbelievable to him, but personal communion with God becomes also unbelievable. His insight tells him that God cannot be spoken to apart from the unreduced reality of the world, because it is in the world itself that God is speaking; but he falsifies what he has thus seen by concluding that there is no speech between God and man. From being the place of meeting with God, the world becomes to him God's place.

Although neither the speakers nor the hearers of the hasidic message knew anything about Spinoza, the message may still be taken as an answer to him; it is an answer to him, because it framed the creed of Israel anew, and in such a way that it became an answer. From of old Israel has proclaimed that the world is not God's place, but that God is "the place of the world," and that yet He dwells within it. Hasidism expresses this principle in a new way, namely, in an entirely practical way. Because God is immanent in the world, the world becomes—in a general religious sense—a sacrament. If the world was God's place, it could not be a sacrament; it is only the fact that the God Who transcends the world is yet also immanent in it which can turn the world into a sacrament. This, however, is not a purely objective statement, which remains true independently of the life lived by the individual; but still less is it a statement which is imprisoned in subjectivity; it is only when it is brought into actual contact with the individual that the world becomes sacramental. That is, in the actual contact of these things and beings with this individual, with you, with me. In all of these things and beings divine sparks dwell, and all of these things and beings are given to this particular individual that this particular individual may through his contact with them redeem the divine sparks. Man's existence in the world becomes fraught with meaning, because the things and beings of the world have been given to him in their sacramental potentiality. Spinoza's world is a world existing continually beyond the life which the individual man or woman lives, and beyond the death which the individual man or woman is going to die, beyond mine and yours; the hasidic world is the concrete world as it is in

this moment of a person's life; it is a world ready to be a sacrament, ready to uphold a real act of redemption. The world is that which is given us, which is imposed upon us, which is offered us; it is the medium in which God speaks to me and in which He wills to receive his answer from me.

There is no room here for the self-sufficiency of the soul who has mistaken her long-drawn-out self-communion for the real dialogue in the All-Light. God does not set himself apart from his creation. But neither is there room for the metaphysical construction which is erected by the soul who fancies that it can see into Reality only when it looks away from the lived situation, who imagines that it is able to speak about God as if He sat like a model for its conceptual constructions, as if He were not hiding under the paraphernalia belonging to the moment of thinking, a mystery which cannot be represented in any definition, but which yet appears, speaks, offers itself in and through the concreteness of the given situation—and which is pushed aside without an answer by all metaphysics.

By its fundamental principle of the actual acceptance of God in things, the hasidic message carries out and widens the ancient teaching of Israel. It is carrying out: in all sections of the Law do we find that "Be ye holy, even as I am holy," not as a command for the gradual sanctification of mankind apart from things, but as a command that mankind as its service to creation shall step by step sanctify things. But the hasidic message is also a widening: In ancient Israel the sacrifice was from the side of cult the sister of the meal, which could not exist without it; the sacrifice was a sanctification of a part of the very same organic matter of which the rest was given to men for their nourishment. In

the hasidic life it is the eating itself which becomes a sacramental service, it is the means whereby redemption comes to the vegetable and animal nature; through the sanctifying acceptance of them as food the sparks in the animals and plants are set free. The distinction made by the Law between clean and unclean animals makes for an exclusion and a limitation, but this is counteracted by the extension of the sanctifying power to all use of things; the exclusion made on principle of a part of nature from sanctification is on principle overcome. All that has been allotted to man for his use, from cattle and trees to fields and ploughs, hides sparks which yearn to be lifted up through this man, and which can be lifted up by the holy use this man makes of what is given him; even man's meeting with strange things and strange creatures in a strange land may carry the Holy Act.

But more than that, the separation has also been healed in the souls of men. In the same way as the things and creatures with which man has to deal are reached to him, so is also all that comes to his mind in imagination, in thought, in wish, and stands before him in alien garb. In all this the hovering sparks are yearning to be set free. Nothing is unholy in itself, nothing is evil in itself; what we call evil is only the undirected storming and rushing of the unredeemed sparks in their need for redemption. It is the passion—it is even thus the very same energy which, when given direction, the one direction, brings forth the true good, the true service, redemption. The worldly and the spiritual life are no longer qualitatively separated side by side in the human soul; there are only the energy and the direction. He who divides his life between God and the world, giving the world what belongs to it in order to save for God what be-

longs to Him, refuses to give God the service commanded by him, that service which consists in giving the one direction to all energy, the sanctification of the everyday in the world and in the soul.

The original evil of all "religion," the separation of "living in God" from "living in the world" is overcome in the hasidic message, and a true, concrete unity takes its place; moreover, the hasidic message gives also the answer to that false mastering of the distinction between God and man which consists in an abstract abolition of it. The complete unity of the God Who is aloof from and superior to the world, and Who yet dwells within it, re-instates the undivided wholeness of human life in its full meaning; there is an acceptance of the world from God's hand, and an acting on the world to make it exist for God's sake. Accepting and acting, tied to the world, stands man, but not merely "man," rather is it this particular man, you, I, who stand thus in the immediate presence of God.

It was this teaching of man's union with the world in God's sight, this answer to Spinoza's teaching, given by Hasidism, which struck so deeply into my life. Already early I dimly perceived, even while I defended myself against seeing it, that I was inevitably destined to love the world.

And the other question—but it is not another question, it is the very same question.

What is the meaning of the world's need for redemption? But what is the meaning of God's indwelling in the world: this that, he dwells with them in the midst of their defilements? It is essentially the same question. The defile-

ment of creation and its need for redemption are one and the same thing; that God dwells in His creation and that God will redeem it are also one and the same thing.

The defilement of creation and not only of man; the indwelling of God in the world and not only the indwelling of God in the soul; it is from this we must start if we want to understand what the hasidic message says about redemption.

What we call evil is found not only in man, it is also the Evil in the world; it is the defilement of creation. But this defilement is nothing positive, it is not an existing character of things. It is only their lack of firmness, their lack of direction, their vacillation.

God has created a world, and He has pronounced his creation to be very good—from whence then comes the evil? God has created a world, and He rejoiced at its completion—from whence then comes the incomplete?

The gnosis of all ages has posited another primal power which stands over against the good power of God and works that which is evil; the gnosis wants to exhibit history as a fight between these two powers, and its victorious consummation as the redemption of the world. But we know what the nameless prophet proclaimed, he whose words are found in the second part of the book of Isaiah: that as light and darkness were both created by God, so also are good and evil. Nothing uncreated stands over against him.

Now, does this not mean that, after all, the bad, the evil is a being, an existing quality? But even darkness is not a being, it is the abyss of lack of light and struggle for light, and as such it was created by God.

The Bible represents evil as having penetrated into creation through an act of the first human beings. But it

knows of a non-human creature prompting this act, and therefore evil, the "serpent." The Kabbalistic teaching, which Hasidism built into its own system, shifts the penetration of evil back into genesis. The Kabbalah teaches that the fire-stream of the creative grace poured itself out over "the vessels," the first-created primal forms, in all its fulness; but the vessels could not stand with it, they "broke in pieces"—and the stream flashed forth into the infinity of "sparks," the "shells" grew round them, want, defilement, evil came into the world. From now on does the incomplete cleave to the completed creation; a suffering world, a world in need of redemption, lies at God's feet. But He does not leave it to lie alone in the abyss of its struggles; His Glory itself descends to the world, following the sparks of his creative passion; His Shekhinah goes into it, goes into "Exile," lives in it; she lives with the sorrowful, suffering, created things in the midst of their defilements—eager to redeem them.

Although the Kabbalah does not say so explicitly, it is yet unmistakably clear that its teaching firmly embraced the conception that already those primal vessels, like the first human beings, had been allotted a movement of their own, an independence and a freedom, were it only the freedom to stand firm in face of the stream of grace or not to stand firm. The sin of the first human beings is thus presented as a not standing firm. Everything has been granted them, the whole fulness of grace is theirs, not even the tree of life is withheld from them; only the knowledge of the limiting of the relation between the original purity and the subsequent impurity of creation, only the mystery of the primordial defect, the mystery of "Good and Evil" has God kept for himself. But they cannot stand firm in face of the abundance



of grace, they follow the promptings of the element of limitation. It is not that they raise themselves against God, it is rather that they do not rise up for Him. This "stretching out of the hand" is not a rebellious movement, it is a helpless, undirected, irresolute, indolent gesture; they do not do it, they have done it. One can see in it the undirected storming and rushing of the sparks in need of redemption; temptation, turmoil, and undecided act. And so they "know" the limited, even as men know, as Adam after this "knew" his wife. They know the limited, they intermingle with it; they know "Good-and-Evil," they take this "Good-and-Evil" up into themselves, as they took into themselves the picked and eaten fruit.

It is then a not standing firm. We know of it, we to whom the situation in which the first human beings found themselves returns day after day, always again for the first time, always repeated; we know of this passive acting, which is nothing but a reaching out from the undirected whirl; we know of the sparks, how they storm and tumble about and get entangled in themselves; we know that what is moving there, our badness, is really our need for redemption, our search for redemption. And perhaps, from those hidden, unimaginable moments, we also know the emergence of another thing, that softest breaking through, the receiving of direction, the deciding, the turning of the swirling movement of the world towards God. Here we have an immediate experience of the fact that self-movement, independence, freedom are given to us. Whatever may be the case with the non-human part of creation, we know about man that the creation has put him into the world with power to do two things, and to do them in reality, and not

only to imagine for a brief moment of self-deception that he could do them. Man can choose God, and he can reject God. That man may fall implies that he may rise; that man has power to lead the world to perdition implies that he has power to lead the world to redemption.

However restricted many a religion and many a theology may take these two powers of man to be, even when they envisage them only as the mere capacity to believe or to withhold belief, they still constitute the actual admission of man into mightiness. And it is this which remains the core of all religious life, just because it is the very core of all human life. However restricted this admission is taken to be, the fact remains that the creation of this being, man, means that God has made room for a co-determining power, for a starting-point for events, for a beginning. Not once only in his life was man free to choose or reject God, or rather, to leave Him unchosen, man is always free to do this or that. Does this mean that God has given away one particle of His power to determine the course of events? We only ask that question, when we are busy subsuming God under our logical categories. In the moments when we break through we have an immediate experience of our freedom, and yet in these moments we also know by an immediate experience that God's hand has carried us. It is these moments which show us how, out of our own personal life, we can draw near to the mystery in which man's freedom and God's determining power, man's reality and God's reality, are no longer contradictory.

One may also ask differently. The first human beings were free before they fell away from God; does that mean that God had not willed what they did? And how can any-

thing happen without God willing it? No theological argumentation can help us here, only the firmly held realisation that God's thoughts are not like our thoughts, that his will cannot be grasped and handled like our will. We may say that God wills that man should choose Him and not fall away from Him; but we have to add to that, God also wills that His creation shall not be an end in itself, but a way; that His world shall be a way; and more than that: In order that this may be so in reality, he wills that his creatures shall go the way themselves, they must go in their own persons, from out of their own personality, and always and again in their own personality; the fall must be as real as the redemption; and the man, the creature, as he has the power really to fall so has he the power really to act on the work of redemption from out of his own self, man, the cross-road of the world. Does that mean that God cannot redeem the world without man's help? It means that God wills not that he could do that. Has God need of man for his work? He wills to have need of man.

God wills to use man for the completion of His work of creation. This sentence gives the foundation of the Jewish doctrine of redemption. But as it is God's will so to use man, this means that the use of man for this work becomes an effective reality. In history as it actually unfolds itself before our eyes we see that God waits for man.

It is not semblance that God has gone into exile by His dwelling in the world; it is not semblance that He suffers by His immanence the fate of the world. And it is not semblance that he waits in order that the initial movement towards redemption should come from the world itself—an initiating by the world not in semblance only. How it happens that

this is not semblance but reality, how it happens that something from out of His own world, be it a falling away or a returning to him, can come upon God, the All-mighty and All-knowing, that is the mystery which belongs to God, the Creator and Redeemer, not more mysterious to me than that he is; and that he is, is far less mysterious to me than that I am, I who am writing this with trembling hand, sitting on a rock bench above a lake.

It would be senseless to try to measure how great is man's part in the redemption of the world. There is not any part that belongs to man, or any part that belongs to God; there is no "as far as here," and there is no "from there on"; there is nothing here that can be measured and weighed. This applies to all human life and perhaps to all life of the created world; it is senseless to ask how far my action reaches, and where God's grace begins; there is no common border-line; what concerns me alone, before I bring something about, is my action, and what concerns me alone, when the action is successfully done, is God's grace. The one is no less real than the other, and neither is a part-cause. God and man do not divide the government of the world between them; man's action is enclosed in God's action, but it is still real action.

Thus each moment of a person's life is really set between creation and redemption; it falls within creation in that it is made, it is tied and bound to redemption in virtue of its power for making; or rather, it is not so much set between the two as in both jointly. Just as creation did not take place once and for all at the beginning of time, but happens all the time throughout the whole of time, so redemption will not come to pass at the end of time, but

happens all the time throughout the whole of time. The moment is not merely coordinated to creation and redemption, but creation and redemption are also contained in it. Creation did not "really" happen once and for all, somehow merely being continued at this very moment so that all creative acts from the very first to the one which is being done at this very moment add up to the sum total of creation; on the contrary, the true point of view is given in the words of the prayer that God renews His creative work every day; the act of creation which still happens has complete power to begin something new, and the moment in which God's creative act happens is not set in a time-series only, but has also its own unconditioned existence. As in the sphere of creation in which God alone acts the moment does not just come from somewhere, but takes place in its own right and in itself, so it is also in the sphere of redemption, where God permits, yea demands, that work of man shall be enclosed in His work, however incomprehensible the mode of this enclosing may be to us. And so the moment of redemption is real not only with respect to perfect redemption, but also in itself; the moments of redemption cannot be added up; although they form a series, yet each of them cowers on the mystery of fulfilment; each of them takes its place in the time-series on the moving canvas of the world's history, and there counts in its place, but each of them also bears its own testimony, sealed up within it, and distinct from that of all the others. This, however, does not mean that each moment becomes a mystical, timeless now; rather does it mean that each moment is filled with all time: in the hovering fraction of time, the fulness of time is manifested. It is not something done to the soul, it is done to the world,

out of the real meeting of God and man. It is "the down-flowing of the blessing."

The knowledge of the redemption of the every-day came to Hasidism both by esoteric and exoteric tradition; the hasidic message has proclaimed the knowledge in its practical form. Hasidism turned against the whole enormous apparatus of kabbalistic instructions, against the powerful efforts of "hurrying the End"; there does not exist a certain, demonstrable, transmittable, teachable, magic-making acting with established formulae and gestures, with spiritual attitudes and tensions, which operate upon the redemption of the world; only the indiscriminate consecration of all acts, only the turning of the normal life as it happens from day to day towards God, only the hallowing of the natural union with the world, have the redeeming power. The All-day of redemption grows only out of the redemption of every day.

The hasidic answer to that catastrophe of Jewish messianism which goes by the name of Sabbatai Zevi is based on the above teaching. This is so not only within the truth of history, but also within actual reality.

It is a mistake to regard the Jewish teaching about the Messiah merely as a belief in a unique final event and in a unique human being as the centre of this event. The sureness of the existence of the "co-operating" power which is allotted to man, to the generations of man, links the end of the world with the present life. Already in the prophetic writings of the first Exile we find mysterious hints at the succession of "the servants of the Lord" who, arising in generation after generation, will bear and purify the defilement of the world, abused and held in low esteem by their fellow-men. Later writings supplement references to

an esoteric view of world-history, according to which also the great persons in the biblical narratives have a messianic character. Each of them was called, each of them failed to stand his best in some respect, the particular sin of each implied his failure in face of the messianic calling. So God waits throughout the generations of men for the one in whom the irremissible movement arising from the creature will win the decisive power. With the deepening of the exile of the world, which displays itself in the exile of Israel, the men who arise in each generation are no longer known to the world, but live in seclusion; they do their work no longer in the light of accessible history, but in the darkness belonging to an inaccessible, personal work of suffering, of which no account, or only misrepresenting accounts, reach the outside world. But the more the fate of the world becomes filled with suffering, the fate of that world with which God suffers through his immanence in it, the more do the lives of these men become filled with meaning and operative in themselves. They are no longer as it were mere foreshadowings of the messianic form, rather in them is the messiahship belonging to the end of time preceded by one of all time, poured out over the ages; without this the fallen world could not continue in existence. It is true that these men are only attempts made by the creature, they are forerunners, but yet the messianic power itself is in them. "Messiah son of Joseph appears from generation to generation." This is the suffering Messiah, who always, again and again, suffers mortal pain for God's sake.

This messianic mystery is based on hiddenness; not on one way or other of keeping the secret, but on a true, actual hiddenness which penetrates to the innermost exist-

ence. The men to whom it comes are those whom the nameless prophet spoke of in his own name, when he said that God had made him a polished shaft, and then hidden him in his quiver. Their hiddenness belongs essentially to their work of suffering. Each of them can be the Promised One; none of them dare in their own self-consciousness be anything but a servant of the Lord. With the tearing apart of their hiddenness not only would their work itself be destroyed, but a counter-work would supervene upon it. Messianic self-disclosure is the disruption of the messiahship.

In order rightly to understand the attitude of Judaism to the appearance of Jesus one must descend to the depth of this faith which is not condensed in any confession, but which can be shown out of the testimonies. Whatever meaning the appearance of Jesus bore for the Gentiles (and its meaning for the Gentiles remains, to me, the real gravity in western history), as seen from the point of view of Judaism, Jesus is the first in the series of men who acknowledged to themselves in their souls and openly in their words their messiahship and thus stepped out of the seclusion of the servants of God, which is the real "messianic secret." That this First One—as I always again experience, when those personal words that ring true in my ears come together into a unity for me, so that their speaker becomes visible to me—that this First One was incomparably the purest, most rightful of them all, the one most endowed with real messianic power, does not alter the fact that he was the first, yea, it belongs rather to it, it belongs to that awful and pathetic character of reality which clings to the whole messianic series.



It also belongs to this character of the series, that the last of them all—that Sabbatai Zevi, who died in the same year as Spinoza—slides over from the true self-confidence to a pretended one, and ends in secession. And, unlike his predecessors, just this one was not followed by a small band of adherents, but the whole of Jewry fell for his teaching, and accepted from him as a true message words which formerly used to be anathema to them, and which they used to consider to be evidence against the truth of the calling. It was a Jewry disordered in the abyss of suffering, it is true, but it was yet the bearer of a real crisis, I mean the self-abolition of auto-messianism. Until Sabbatai Zevi appeared, the people had held out against the proclamations of the “*meshi-him*” and against its own thirst for redemption. Now when it for once gave up resistance, the catastrophe put an end not only to this one event, but also this whole type of events, that is to the meeting of the man who swings over from being the hidden servant of the Lord to the consciousness of his own messiahship with a band who took it upon itself to begin the Kingdom of God on earth.

Our epoch would take it as self-evident that we are here confronted with the confluence of two self-delusions, the one a personal one, the other a collective one. But if we are to understand what I have tried so far to describe, we must realise that we are not dealing with self-delusions only, we are dealing with the real trespassing of a real boundary. It is a boundary man can truly move upon only as sensitively and as tremblingly as the magnetic needle. The events of the auto-messianic epoch in the Jewish teaching of redemption (to which corresponds on the Christian side the baptist movement in its various forms) constitute a series of

errors, but they were errors in the realm of the reality between God and man.

The hasidic message of redemption should be understood in connection with the attitude of the Baalshem to redemption. It rises against the messianic self-differentiation between one man and other men, between one age and other ages, between one act and other acts. To the whole of mankind is given the power to co-operate, all ages stand immediately face to face with redemption, all action for God's sake may be called messianic action. But only unpremeditated action can be action for God's sake. The self-differentiation, the reflection of man on a messianic privilege belonging to this or that person, to this or that hour, to this or that action, destroys the unpremeditated quality of the act. To turn one's whole world-life towards God and then to let it expand in all its moments even till the last, that is man's work towards redemption.

We live in an unredeemed world. But from every life of man that has associated itself to the world without arbitrariness a seed of redemption falls in it. And the harvest is God's.

# Symbolical and Sacramental Existence in Judaism

I: *The symbolical existence in the world of prophecy*

HUMAN existence is in its relation to symbols and sacraments not only the place in which they appear, and not only the material on which they impress themselves. The factual existence of a human being can itself be a symbol or a sacrament.

It does not belong to the nature of symbols to hover timelessly over concrete actualities. Whenever the symbol appears, it owes its appearance always to the unforeseen, unique occasion, to its having appeared the first time. The symbol derives its enduring character from a transitory event. It is true that when we stand on the brink of the lived world, we acknowledge that all which is transitory is "only" a simile; but when we live in the world, we learn that only that which is transitory can become a simile. For the image of the unbroken meaning, for its proper expression, compared with which all that we call language is only estimation, serves always in the first instance nothing but our born, mortal body—everything else is only repetition, simplification, imitation. The spiritual together with its timeless working forms a compact whole, it does not point to something beyond itself; the body, time's prisoner, it alone can be made transparent in its fleeting gestures. The

covenant which the Absolute enters into with the concrete, not heeding the general, the "idea," it chooses always for itself a sign which is more fleeting than the rainbow of Noah's covenant; it chooses movements made by the human figure, be it movements of posture or of action. And this sign endures. It may lose in immediate validity, in "evidential value," but it may also renew itself out of later human existence, which accomplishes anew. All symbols are ever in danger of becoming spiritual, and not binding images, instead of remaining real signs sent into life; all sacraments are ever in danger of becoming plain experiences, levelled down to the "religious" plane, instead of remaining the incarnate connection between what is above and what is below. Only through the man who devotes himself is the original power saved for further present existence.

Plato distinguishes in the *Timaeus* (72B) between the "manteis," the diviners, whom he takes to be "manentes," raving, distraught by the god, and who receive from the gods in mysterious sounds that which they "divine," and the "prophetai," the "interpreters," who interpret the mystery hid in the sound, and translate it into human speech. When Pindar\* assigns the part of "divining" to the Muse, and the part of "interpreting" to the poet, then nothing more has happened than that the passive element of the former has been pressed into the background: the essential relationship remains the same; the Muse gives the poet her primordial sound, he shapes it into words and verse; but the Muse does not utter what is hers, only what belongs

\* *Fragment 150.*

to the god, to her lord Apollon, by whom she, a superhuman Pythia, is possessed. But, as Apollon himself acknowledges in Aeschylos,† even he also serves as mantis and prophet combined a higher power, Zeus, who endows him with knowledge; Apollon gives it out, but the one who seizes what he says, be it Muse or Pythia, holds no words, but only the mystery which he utters but does not say, until at last he who hears it, the "prophetic" interpreter, proclaims it.

The "manteia," the divination, is not yet for the Greeks a "finished" speech. It breaks forth, untrammelled, not to be comprehended by the unprophetic man; only by the prophet is it first comprehended and formed into logos. The prophet translates, but from a language which is no language to the ear of him who is not called. We must take it that when a man unites both functions, he acts first as mantis and then as prophet; instead of a differentiation in persons comes a differentiation in condition, a change in the person. The duality remains.

Not so with the biblical nabi. It is in the first instance not without significance that here the conception is not used also in a secular sense, as it is in Greek, where one might also call the exponent of a philosophy, or even the announcer in an athletic game, a prophet, using the word in the sense of a man who proclaims or announces something. The nabi exists only in the relation of deity and humanity, as the mediator of the language, "the bearer of the word in the vertical plane," \* and not only from above to below as the bringer of a divine message, but also from below to

† *Eumenides*, vv. 17 ff. (cp. 615 ff.)

\* Buber, *Koenigtum Gottes* (1932), p. 165.

above. It is as "herald" that Abraham shall "interpose himself as mediator" for the King of Philistia (this is the original meaning of the Hebrew term for "to pray"); it is as "herald" that Miriam sings, as "herald" that Deborah sings her triumph song of thanksgiving. It is the nabi's duty to let the speech spoken between deity and humanity fulfil itself. The God chooses for Himself this messenger from his "mother's womb," so that, through him, the original call of admonition or promise may reach the ear of him who is to receive it, but also that the cry from the heart of the creature may gather itself in him and be lifted up. It is true that the divine intention does not aim at mediacy but at immediacy; but the mediator is the way to the immediacy, to the desired time when all God's people shall be heralds and bearers of the spirit (*Numbers*, 11.29).

The biblical nabi-conception is seen most clearly in a passage (*Exodus*, 7.1) in which it is used as a simile of the relationship between two people who are to each other exactly what the *elohim*, the power of God, and the nabi, its herald, are to each other: "See," says God to Moses, "I give you to Pharaoh for an *elohim*, and Aaron, your brother, shall be your nabi." The simile here lets both of them, *elohim*, the inspiring power, and nabi, the expressing being, appear unmistakably in their mutual relationship. How intimate this mutual relationship is conceived to be is shown at an earlier stage of the story by a parallel passage (*Exodus*, 4.16): "He shall then speak for you to the people, and it shall be thus: he shall be to you a mouth, and you shall be to him an *elohim*." To be the nabi of an *elohim* means then to be his "mouth." His mouth, not his megaphone. The nabi does not convey a finished speech, which

has already been made articulate, he shapes to sound a hidden, soundless speech, the speech which in the human sense is pre-verbal, and in the divine sense primally verbal, as the mouth of a person shapes to sound the secret, soundless speech of his innermost being. This fundamental conception reaches its full pathos, when God speaks of his relationship to the nabi and uses just this image, and the biblical distance between God and man is only still kept by God not saying "my mouth," but "as my mouth." Jeremiah in a critical moment besought God for revenge over his persecutors (*Jeremiah*, 15.15). He who answers him does not merely ignore the request by which the prophet has been untrue to his office, he indicates to him (vv. 19ff.) that only when he finds himself back again on God's way from the all too human way on which he has gone and lost himself, will He re-instate him and let him stand "before his face," "And if you bring forth what is true, emptied of what is base, you shall be as my mouth."

It is of decisive importance to notice that God does not here pronounce that he will use the human mouth as his own, *the whole human being* shall be to him as a mouth.

The Greek prophet is not this, he cannot be this. His mouth "speaks forth," not his person. But also the mantis is not this, and cannot be this. His person, seized upon and possessed by God, utters words, but itself pronounces nothing. So long as a person functions as mantis he is unintelligible to him who receives the utterance; as soon as he becomes his own prophet, he is only the speaker of a word with which he himself has nothing to do.

In the biblical world of faith there are not two persons who stand beside God, one immediately, the other medi-

ately; there is only one person, even he whom the divine storm of the spirit blows into "to clothe itself with him" (*Judges*, 6.34), even he it is who is not only with his linguistic tools, but rather with his whole being and life, speaker for the hidden voice which blows through him.

"Pythia and interpreting priestly poet were not here divided; the Israelite prophet was both in one," writes Max Weber. For the prophetic word in the Bible, as distinct from the word of the Delphic Oracle, this means that the rising speech and the finished speech are biblically identical, whereas in Greece an ecstatic babbling first must be translated before it can become proper speech. The speech which breaks forth from the biblical nabi is the speech which is cast into words, it is rhythmically formed, "objective" speech. And yet it is not words which can be separated from him, words which are only "laid in his mouth"; his whole personal being as a speaker belongs to his speech, the whole speaking human body, the ensouled body which is now inspired by the "ruach" the "pneuma"; the whole existence of this human being belongs to the speech, the whole human being is a mouth.

Here there is no division between a passive "maines-thai," possession and rapture, and an active "proiepein," the mastering, forming speech. The form of the speech is here not "put on," it is born in the initial urge for articulation—wherefore also for example all metrical schematism must necessarily always fail in the hand of the scholar, as the "ready-made" metre is every time overthrown by the new stream of prophecy. The person who is seized by the ruach and pressed to words does not stammer before he speaks;



he still speaks "in the grasp of the hand," a strictly rhythmical speech, but yet one through which the cascading fullness of the moment rushes.

Also the thesis of a "development" from "primitive ecstatic" to "word-prophet" leads one astray; in the Bible the ecstatic never appears except in conjunction with the word-prophet; it is true that we read about wild and "raving," but not unmusical, behaviour, but we do not read of babbling or of unarticulated shouting, we come to know the voice of the nabi only as word, and his word only as speech. Passivity and activity are here in historical time too not divided but one. We are here dealing with one single, inclusive function, and the undivided person is necessary to establish the indivisible function.

But in order rightly to grasp the nature of prophetic existence, it is necessary also to consider the purpose of prophecy.

Both the Greek word of the oracle as well as the biblical word of the nabi, are tied to the situations in which they arise. But the oracle gives answers to a situation which is brought before it as a question by emissaries who ask for information; the nabi, sent by God, speaks unasked into the biographical or historical situation. The answer of the oracle is prediction of an unalterable future, the warning of the nabi implies the uncertainty and the deciding power of the hour. In the first case the future is written down on a scroll, and the unfolding of the scroll constitutes what happens in history; in the second case nothing has been set down; over the freely oscillating replies of man to approaching events God mysteriously holds his sheltering hands; his power, which is greater and more mysterious than the statu-

tory "omnipotence" of dogma, is able to reserve some powerfulness for the moment of the creature.

In Herodotus (I.91) the Pythia declares that even for a god it is impossible to elude the destined fate. The paradigmatic book of Jonah tells how God through a nabi has let it be proclaimed to the sinful city of Nineveh that it is to be destroyed, not a conditional destruction which can be averted, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" sounds the call of the prophet (3. 4). Nineveh, however, accomplished its repentance, its "turning" and now God is also "turned." This reciprocal relationship of turning had been the secret meaning of the message, unknown to the prophet himself, and afterwards unwelcome to him. It is therefore a legitimate exposition of biblical faith, when Jewish tradition says of the prophets that they have "only prophesied to those who turn." † The nabi advises the people of a situation with reference to the actual co-deciding power which these people possess. His speech is not merely relative to a situation. Its tie with the situation reaches to the secret ground of creation in which existence is rooted. And just because his speech conceives the moment in this way and corresponds to it in this way does it remains valid for all generations and all nations.

Prophecy is based on the reality of history as it is happening. Against all mantic knowledge of a ready-made future, it sets the insight into the true existence of the moment, the moment which is determined by so many things, and which yet in the single-heartedness of its decisions is truly determining.

The spoken word alone cannot, however, satisfy the  
 † *Babyl. Talmud*, tr. Berachot, 34b.

determining power of the moment. In order to be equal to it, in order to meet it in its boundless reality the spoken word needs to be supplemented by the power of the attitude and action of significant signs. Only together with this is it possible for the spoken word to present and to invoke the power of determination. Not the word by itself has effect on reality, only the word set into the whole existence of a human being, appearing out of the whole of his existence, associated with the whole of it.

In the Bible a sign can connote a proof or a confirmation; but in its nature it is neither. One example of many may show this. To Moses' objection, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, that I should lead the sons of Israel out of Egypt!" God answers, "Certainly, I will be with you, and this is the sign for you that I myself send you: when you have led the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain" (*Exodus*, 3.12). This "sign" cannot be understood as a confirmation. But in the Bible a sign means something else: incarnation. The biblical person, and with him the biblical God, demands that the spirit shall express itself in a more perfect, more exact way than that of the word, that it shall make itself incarnate. When man demands this of God, it is called in biblical language, the demanding of a sign, that is, the demanding of corporeality of the message. When God demands this of man, it is called the "tempting" of a person, that is, the drawing out of a person of that which hides itself in him, the bringing him to full actuality; thus God tempts Abraham (*Genesis*, ch. 22) in that he, terrible and merciful, grants him the extreme possibility of actualization. But God wills also that man should desire of Him the incarnation of the spirit; he who de-

mands a sign of Him is approved; the man who is not willing to receive the sign which God offers him shows not faith, but lack of faith (*Isaiah*, 7.11-13). The mission given to Moses from the burning bush becomes incarnate in the "sign," when the people who have been led out of the service in Egypt have come to the burning mountain and now will serve the God who has brought them unto Himself "on eagles' wings" (*Exodus*, 19.4).

The sign cannot be translated, word cannot be substituted for it, one cannot look up in any book of signs what a sign means; but the spoken word completes itself in the sign, and becomes corporeal. The spoken word itself belongs to it, but in its very being spoken, as a part of corporeal attitude and act.

Only what is transitory can become a simile. Both of them, sign and simile, are not solvable; no pronouncement can be made out of both; both express what cannot be expressed in any other way; body and image cannot be paraphrased; body, like image, gives first the depth of the word; and corporeal signs are no proof, as the simile in images is no comparison.

The prophesying of the nabi, which is no soothsaying, but its exact contrary, contemplates an event whose occurrence or non-occurrence depends on the either-or of the moment. Such a contemplated event, however, can only be adequately expressed through a happening given in a sign. The fullness of determination and the determining power of the moment as the fountain-head of events can only be rightly given by a happening in signs, by a "symbolic act."

It is against this background that we can understand all those actions which the biblical prophets did as signs, from

the most fleeting ones, as when Jeremiah breaks in pieces a potter's earthen mug before the Elders, or when Ezekiel joins together two sticks of wood, to those which reach as far into life as Hosea marrying a whore and giving the children of this marriage names of deprecation. From an example like the last one, unsurpassable as it is in its harshness, it becomes immediately clear that we are not dealing with life-like metaphors, but with a corporeal presentation in the strictest sense of the term. What here has to be shown in the world of men is the marriage between God and the whore Israel. "Go," says the voice in its first declaration to the nabi, "Go and take to yourself a whore as a wife and children of whoredom, *because* the country, practising whoredom, whores away from the Lord." Unsurpassably harsh this "because" says that God claims the lived life of his own called herald to be a sign, to be a material presentation of an experience of God's, his experience with Israel. What happens here is a holy act of terrible earnestness, it is a real sacred drama. The account of the marriage and the immediate identification with God's words interlock with each other, moving us to terror. The account has just been given of the naming of "the children of the whoredom," *i.e.*, the lawful children of Hosea and the whore—"You-will-not-find-mercy" is one daughter called ("*because* I will not any more have mercy, have mercy on the house of Israel, that I should again be deceived by them"), "Not-my-people" a son is called ("*because* you are not my people and I am not there for you")—and then, suddenly (2.4) the voice of God speaks in the children to the children of Israel, "Fight against your mother, fight! For she is not my wife and I am not her husband! She must

take off her whore's paint from her face, the adultress's marks from between her breasts!" We are here made to see most keenly to what depths of reality the existence of "the signs" can reach.

The nabi does not merely act out a sign, he lives it. Not what he does is in the last resort the sign, but in that he does it he himself is the sign.

But it is in Isaiah (8.11-22) that the symbolical existence of the prophet reaches both its highest intensity and clarity. It is a time of the greatest confusion in which the coming catastrophe of the people announces itself; truth and falsehood are so intermingled that the soul is scarcely able to distinguish, scarcely able to recognise what is right; God himself becomes, mistaken, misunderstood, misused, "a snare and a trap for the settler in Jerusalem." It is true that there is also a comforting prophecy for this situation, which points beyond the coming catastrophe (it is found in our book of Isaiah, 9.1-6). But to formulate that now would mean to give it over to being mistaken, misunderstood, misused. Therefore Isaiah says as the word for the hour, "It is necessary to tie up the evidence, to seal up the instruction in my apprentices." As one ties up and seals a document, so does he with the prophecy which he administers to his disciples. They themselves represent now the sealed document, whose seal shall only be broken, when, in the middle of the catastrophe, the cry goes up to the people which in vain has run to its "chirping, muttering" "elves" for oracle (v. 19), "To the instruction, to the testimony!" Until the time when God, who now "hides his face from the house of Jacob" (v. 17) will have mercy on "the remnant" that turns to him, will the prophet "tarry" in the

coming "night-dark fear" (v. 22) in the midst of the people who "have no dawn," he and his "apprentices" and his own children, of which he has given one the name of the prophecy, "the remnant-turns," obviously at God's command. And he expresses this "tarrying" in the following way (v. 18), "Now I and the children, which the Lord has given me, are there in Israel for a sign and a confirmation, from the Lord of the hosts, Him who dwells on Mount Zion." These people, the core of that "holy remnant" are there as signs, they live their independent lives, at the same time also as signs. It is this man who is with the whole of his being a sign, who is "God's mouth." Through his symbolical existence is said what there is to be said. This is something different from much which we call a symbol. But no symbol, in no timeless height, can in any other way become and become again reality than by becoming incarnate in such a living and dying human existence.

## 2: *The sacramental existence in the world of Hasidism*

A symbol is an appearance of meaning, the appearing and becoming apparent of meaning in the form of corporeality. The covenant of the Absolute with the concrete is manifested in the symbol. But a sacrament is the binding of meaning to body, it is the performing of the deed of covenant. The covenant of the Absolute with the concrete takes place in the sacrament.

Appearance, taken as an event, has one direction, it goes from "above" to "below," that which appears enters into the corporeality which bears it. A covenant has two directions; what is above binds itself to that which is below,

and what is below binds itself to that which is above; what is above binds what is below, and what is below binds what is above; they bind themselves to each other; meaning and life bind each other. Where a covenant is manifested it is like seeing the reflected image of a person, who himself is out of sight; where the covenant takes place, it is like clasping hand in hand. Hand in hand is the covenant made, and hand in hand it is renewed.

The foremost meaning of a sacrament, although not the only meaning, is that the divine and the human join themselves to each other, without merging themselves in each other, a lived Beyond-transcendence-and-immanence. But also when it is only two human beings who consecrate themselves to each other sacramentally—in marriage, in brotherhood—that other covenant, the covenant between the Absolute and the concrete is consummated secretly; for the consecration does not come by the power of the human partners, but by the power of the eternal wings that overshadow both. Everything absolute into which human beings enter with each other has its strength from the presence of the Absolute.

The sacrament has rightly been called "the most dynamic of all ritual forms." \* But what is of greatest importance about this its dynamics is that it is stripped of its essential character, when it no longer includes an elemental, life-claiming and life-determining experience of the other person, of the otherness, as of something coming to meet and acting hitherwards. The three-dimensionality of the event, the reality of its dimension of depth, is given by the fact that the human being in the sacramental consecration

\* R. R. Marett, *Sacraments of Simple Folk* (1933), p. 9.



neither merely "performs" something, nor, even less, merely experiences something, but that he is laid hold of and demanded in the core of his wholeness, and needs nothing less than his wholeness if he is to sustain it. The ecclesiastical convention, or other similar sacral conventions, levels the event down to gesture, while mystic exaltation presses it together to an ecstatically felt instant.

All sacraments have a natural mode of operation, taken from the natural course of life and consecrated in the sacrament, and a material or corporeal otherness, with which one comes into holy contact—a contact in which the secret power of this otherness becomes effective in its work on one.

"Primitive" man is a naive pansacramentalist. Everything is to him full of sacramental substance, everything, each thing and each function is ever ready to light up into a sacrament for him. He knows of no selection of objects and agencies, he knows only of methods and favourable hours. "It" is everywhere, one has only to be able to catch it. There are formulae and rhythms for doing so, it is true, but one only acquires these too, when one ventures on it, and he who is already capable of knowing must always expose himself again and again to the dangerously appropriating and demanding contact.

The crisis of all primitive mankind comes with the discovery of that which is fundamentally not-holy, the a-sacramental, which withstands the methods, and which has no "hour," a province which steadily enlarges itself. In some tribal communities, which we usually still call primitive, we can, even if only in some exceptional individuals, observe this critical phase, in which the world threatens to become neutralised, and to deny itself to the holy contact.

This for example is what the Ba-ila of Northern Rhodesia may mean, when they say about their god, "Leza has become old," or "Leza is not to-day any longer what he should be." \* What we call religion in a narrower sense has perhaps from time to time arisen in such a crisis. All historical religion is *selection* of sacramental material and sacramental acts. By separating the holy from the abandoned profane the sacrament is saved. The sanctity of the covenant becomes concentrated in an objective-functional way.

But with this the sacrament enters into a sphere of new and more difficult problems. For a concrete religion can only then prove the earnestness of its request, when it exacts of the faithful who have "faith" that they stake nothing less than the whole of their person. But the sacrament, which is founded on a division of the holy and the profane, in its concentrated power, misleads the faithful into feeling secure in a merely "objective" consummation without any personal participation, in *opus operatum*, and to evade the fact that they themselves in the whole of their being are laid hold of and claimed by the sacrament. To the extent, however, that the life-substance of the faithful ceases to graft itself into the sacrament, it loses in depth, in three-dimensional reality, in corporeality. It was this which happened for instance in biblical Israel. In the sacramental offering the faithful only let themselves be represented by the animal, originally the central intention was that of bringing themselves, and it was this which withered away in the security of an objectively executed, ritual atonement.† Or, in the Bible the anointing of a king was the act by which a person was placed in a

\* E. W. Smith<sup>1</sup> and A. M. Dale, *The Ilu-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia*, ii. 200 ff.

† cp. Buber, *Koenigtum Gottes*, pp. 99 ff.

position of lifelong responsibility to God for the continued task entrusted to him of being God's vice-gerent;† in the western rites of coronation this degenerated into a grandiose affirmation of personal power.

An attempt to re-establish, a reformation, may succeed where the inner crisis of a given sacramentalism questions the original content of a religion, and the original earnestness of its demands. The reformation too aims at saving the sanctity of the covenant in that it again takes seriously the presence of the human being. In the strife between Luther and Zwingli about the mode of the divine presence in Holy Communion the issue was also secretly that of the human presence; Luther noticed, what Zwingli overlooked, that by a merely symbolic divine presence the human being is not laid hold of and claimed in the whole of his personality.

The principle of the selection of sacramental material and acts is not attacked at all by reformations; only some sectarians lay hands on it from time to time, without succeeding in overcoming or replacing it. It looks as if the man who has passed through the discovery of the fundamentally not-holy cannot any more attain to a sacred relationship with all that is in the world; as if the reduction of the life of faith to one sphere was the necessary centre of all religion, because if this were abandoned, it would mean the removal of the bulwark against pantheism, which threatens to dissolve concrete religion. "Existing alone," says the South Sea singer \* about his god Taaroa or Tangaroa, "he trans-

† Cp. my forthcoming book, *The Teaching of the Prophets*, chapter "Divine and human kingship."

I. A. Moerenhout, *Voyages aux Iles du Grand Océan* (Paris, 1837), i. 419. (The translation given by Bastian in his *Heilige Sage der Polynesiens* is far too free.)

forms himself into world. The pivots on which the world spins round are Taaroa, its supporting blocks are Taaroa. Taaroa is the sand of the primordial grains." Concrete religion must fear to let the image of the Lord, the eternal counterpart in the faith relationship, run out into "the sand of the primordial grains."

There has existed, however, an essentially reformatory, great religious movement which outlined a new pansacramentalism. It did not go back behind that critical discovery, for the way there is barred, and he who attempts a return ends in madness or mere literature; it pressed forward to a new comprehensiveness. This comprehensiveness, which is without reduction, knows that the sacramental substance cannot be found nor manipulated in the totality of things and functions, but it believes that it can be awakened and set free in each object and in each act, not by methods which somehow can be acquired, but through the presence of the whole man who wholly gives himself; through sacramental existence.

The great movement of which I speak, the hasidic movement, arose two centuries ago in a dark corner of Eastern Europe, and there—degenerated, but still able to be regenerated—it remained. But the movement must be taken up into the history of religion as an incomparable attempt to rescue the sacramental life of man from being corrupted by facile routine.

To hasidic pansacramentalism the holy in things is not, as it is to primitive pansacramentalism, a force which one takes possession of, a power which one can overpower, but it is laid in the things as sparks, and waits for its liberation and fulfilment through the human being who gives himself

completely. The man of sacramental existence is not a magician; he does not merely put himself at stake on it; he exercises no power, but a service, the service; he gives himself really and unreservedly. He gives himself up in service that is to say, every time anew. To the question what is important (in a sacramental sense), the answer is, "That with which one is immediately occupied." And every case, if it is taken seriously in its unique character and situation, proves itself to be something that cannot be anticipated, something withdrawn from planning and precautionary measures. No traditional formulae and rhythms of any kind, no inherited methods of exercising power, nothing which can be known, nothing which can be learnt, are of any use to the man of sacramental existence; he has ever to endure through the moment which is not and cannot be foreseen, ever to hold redemption, fulfilment out to each thing or being in the moment which rushes towards him. And he cannot begin to select, to divide; for it is not for him to decide what shall meet him and what shall not meet him; and there is no not-holy, there is only that which has not yet been hallowed, which has not yet been redeemed to its holiness, that which he shall hallow.

The hasidic movement is usually taken to be a revolt of "feeling" against a religious rationalism which overintensified and rigidified the teaching of the divine transcendence, and against a ritualism which made the practice of observing the commandments detached and shallow. But what acts in this antithesis cannot be understood by means of the conception of feeling; it is the soaring up of a true vision of unity, and of a passionate asking for wholeness. It is not merely a repressed emotional life which demands its rights

that here stands over against its opponent; it is an image of God which has grown greater, and a will to realisation which has grown stronger. The border-line drawn between God and world in teaching and the border-line drawn between the holy and the profane in life satisfy no longer that double insight which has grown up, because both border-lines are static, immovable, timeless, because they do not admit of any influence from what really happens in time. The enhanced image of God demands a more dynamic, a more fluid frontier between God and world, for it means knowledge of a power that desires to diffuse itself, and which yet limits itself, of an opposing and yet also yielding substance. And the strengthened will to realisation demands a more dynamic, more fluid border-line between the realms of holy and profane, for it cannot leave the redemption, for which as such it has been promised that both realms shall become one, to allow the messianic time; it must actively desire the moment to receive what rightfully falls to it. It must be observed, from historical point of view, that already inside that "rabbinic" world around which the battle raged were all the elements of the "new," fighting for domination, and gaining ground. In order to understand this, it is necessary to know, what has been all too little acknowledged, that a tendency towards sacramental life has always been powerful in Judaism. It can be proved against other opinions that there is scarcely any one Christian sacrament which has not a sacramental or semi-sacramental Jewish antecedent; this, however, is not of decisive importance in this connection, but what is of importance is that at all times, also during the talmudic period, masters of unmistakably sacramental forms of existence arose, men in whose lives and in whose

whole attitude to life, in whose experiences and acts, the sanctity of the covenant showed itself effectively. The historical line of such people is well-nigh unbroken. The "zaddik" of the dawn of Hasidism, the classical zaddik, is only a specially clear-cut, theoretically delineated example of the same archetype as has come down to us from the biblical world and points into a future one.

The hasidic pansacramentalism can, however, be grasped on a still more important level of being when one considers the relationship of the movement to the Kabbalah.\* Hasidism did not fight the Kabbalah as it fought rabbinism; it wanted to continue and perfect it; it has taken over its concepts, frequently its style, on some points also the methodology of its teaching; and kabbalistic works by hasidic writers do not depart from the beaten track of the later Kabbalah. Also theurgical practices of kabbalistic stamp make their appearance more than once in the history of Hasidism, sometimes in strangely anachronistic ways. Nevertheless, in its own nature, Hasidism breaks with the fundamental principles of the Kabbalah; where it is concerned with its true object, with the life lived in the covenant, it speaks with a quite different voice, and on essential points it speaks in opposition to the kabbalistic teaching and attitude, nowhere explicitly, perhaps nowhere consciously, but yet unmistakably; and what counts still more: what is been told here in a legendary literature, whose like for size, manysidedness, vitality, and indigenous wild charm I do not know, of its central men, of all the many zaddikim, shows almost throughout a quite different nature, a quite different existence from that of Kabbalism, open to the

The standard work on the Kabbalah is Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism."

world, pious in its attitude to the world, in love with the world.

First, an antithesis which seems to be superficial but which is significant, the Kabbalah is esoteric. What it says hides something unsaid. The ultimate meaning is only open to the adepts, to the initiated. A cleft runs through mankind even with respect to the approach to God's reality. That Hasidism cannot tolerate: *here*, at the approach, there must not be any more differentiation, here there stands the brotherhood of the Father's sons, the secret is for all or none, to none or to all is the heart of eternity open. What is reserved for the learned part of mankind, what is kept from the poor in spirit, cannot be the living truth. Hasidic legend praises in bold, love-filled tones the simple man. He has an undivided soul; and where there is such a soul, there God's unity wants to dwell. Sacramental union means the life of the unity with the unity.

The Kabbalah is according to its origin, but also according to its nature which always breaks forth; it is, moreover, in distinction from all other gnoses, an anti-dualistic gnosis.\*

To express it with the simplification necessary in this connection: the origin of all gnosis is the original question that has been pressed to the point of despairing of the world, the question: How is the contradiction which in every course of life and history is experienced as insuperable, the corroding essence of existence in this world, how is this to be

\* When the important book by Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (first volume, 1934) is published in full, it will probably be proved that the teaching of Plotinus should also be regarded as a predominantly anti-dualistic reform of gnosis; but it can then only still be regarded as a transformation of gnosis into philosophy, not, like the Kabbalah, as gnosis



reconciled with God's being? This pressing of the question is later than the Old Testament; each true gnosis arises in a cultural environment which has been touched by the Old Testament, almost every gnosis is explicitly or implicitly a revolt against it. The biblical experience of unity—One determining power, One superior partner of man—met the experience of contradiction coming from depths of suffering by pointing to the secret character of the secret. To determine what that is which appears as contradiction or absurdity is an insurmountable barrier for knowledge (Job), but is dimly to be conceived in the lived through mystery of suffering (Deutero-Isaiah); just here emerges the strongest manifestation of sacramental existence, in which suffering itself becomes a sacrament (*Isaiah*, ch. 53). But the Jewish apocalyptic literature cannot any longer master the question; the *Apocalypse of Esdras* ("The Fourth Book of Esdras"), for instance, does not know any longer of the faithful intercourse with the secret, but retains only the submission without nearness, which is, at the same time, the renunciation of the world and the spoliation of the sacramental life. It is at this point that gnosis intervenes, only just employing the stones from the tumbled-down huge edifices of ancient oriental religions to build up the most fantastic new structure. It interprets the problematics of the world as a problematics of the deity, be it that a negative principle, evil or only bad, stands over against the good God, be it that brittle or corruptible powers spring from the good itself, powers which fall into the sphere of evil, and as world-soul bear the destiny of the contradiction, until they are allowed to ascend again. In these conceptions the Other is always taken for granted, the antagonistic or merely resisting force, the

counter-power or the counter-world, and it is described more or less massively, sometimes even only as "the spaces of shadow and emptiness" (Valentinus). The undertaking of the Kabbalah was to deprive this Other of its independence, and draw even it into the dynamic of the divine unity.

By using a combination of gnostic and neo-platonic schemata the Kabbalah fashioned a monstrous prodigy out of a talmudic teaching. It is the teaching which stood up against the apocalyptic resignation, the teaching about the divine attributes or entities of severity and mercy and their dialectic intercourse, in which the drama of the world process appears as a drama falling within the deity. This dual dialectics, which it is important to grasp as real, and yet not as dualistic, is multiplied by the Kabbalah in the intercourse of the "sephiroth," the divine primal numbers or primal glories with each other, the powers and orders which it lets proceed from the eternally hidden aseity of God, called the "Without Limit," through a "contraction" and a "division," remaining in God and yet founding the world. Their progressively descending arrangement continues into the world's layers, till the lowest, corporeal world of "shells" is reached; the dynamics of their covering and uncovering, their pouring forth and damming up, their binding and loosening, produces the problematics of the cosmic and creaturely existence. As the pre-cosmic catastrophes of "the Death of the Primal Kings," or "the Splintering of the Vessels" with their cosmic consequences arose out of separations, dislocations of gravity, overflowings in the domain of the aeons, so have also all inner-worldly hindrances and perturbations come about, down to those demonic powers which befall the human soul. And yet it is just from

this our world that the conquest of the problematics can be effected, through the sacramental act of man who by prayer and deed aims at the supreme mysteries of the names of God and their intertwining; through this is the service rendered towards the union of the powers of God, in which the second, the perfect unity of being prepares itself. The kabbalistic reconciliation of the experience of unity and the experience of contradiction is also ultimately, like the biblical reconciliation, a sacramental one.

The protest against the Kabbalah announces itself twice in Hasidism; it is not outspoken, but it is firm in its factuality.

The one protest directs itself against the schematising of the mystery. It is for the Kabbalah, as for all gnosis, essential to see through the contradiction of existence and to free itself from it; it is essential for Hasidism faithfully to endure the contradiction and thus redeem it. The Kabbalah outlines a map of the primeval mysteries, on which also the origins of the contradictions find their place. Hasidism—in so far as it “deals with Kabbalah” which it does frequently but seldom more than peripherically—retains its image of the upper world, as it is not able to substitute another image. But it is within its own realm agnostic, it is not concerned with an objective knowledge which can be formulated and schematised, it is concerned with the vital, the biblical “knowledge” of the fundamental, mutual relationship to God. It is true that “just the classical masters of the Kabbalah always contested that the unfolding into finiteness of the goodness laid up in God which is presented in their teachings connecting theology and cosmogony till the two become indistinguishable, should be an objective process,

that is, a process as it appears from the side of God." \* But this is only a metaphysical and epistemological principle which is not to be understood as tending towards practice; it does not enter into the system itself at any point; the whole systematic structure of the Kabbalah is determined by a principle of certitude which hardly ever stops short, hardly ever cowers with terror, hardly ever prostrates itself. Hasidic piety, on the other hand, finds its real life just in stopping short, in letting itself be disconcerted, in its deep-seated knowledge of the impotence of all ready-made knowledge, of the incongruity of all acquired truth, in the "holy insecurity." In this is also founded its love of the "ignorant." What is of importance? A man may "climb about in the upper worlds"; suddenly it touches him, and everything is blown away, and he stands in an infinite, pathless darkness before the eternal presence. Only the defenceless, outstretched hand of him who is insecure is not withered by the lightning. We are sent into the world of contradiction; when we soar away from it into spheres where it appears fathomable to us, then we evade our task. It would be contrary to the faith and humour of our existence—Hasidism is both faithful and humorous—to believe that there is a stratum of existence into which we only need to raise ourselves to get "behind" the problematics. The absurd has been given me that I may withstand it in my life; this withstanding the absurd, is the meaning which I can experience.

The second hasidic protest against the Kabbalah turns on its making the mystery into magic. Magic is not at all identical with faith in man's transcending influence, that is, in the effect human nature and human life have on the yonder

\* Scholem, article "Kabbalah in the Encyclopaedia Judaica IX," p. 670.

side of what can be understood within the logic of causality; magic is rather the conviction within this faith that there are definite inner and outer acts and attitudes which can be handed down and are handed down, and through the execution of which the believed effect is reached. Magic, which can exist both inside and outside sacramentalism, in the cases where it appears in connection with gnosis it is simply its other side; its surveying the means (and now these means are the means to be employed against the contradiction of existence) belongs together with the gnostic seeing through the contradiction. These traditional magic methods could be used in the Kabbalah in connection with very different activities in life; they are the "kavanoth," the intentions which were created out of the rich store of name- and letter-mysticism, and which, together with what they effected on letters and names, wanted to have an effect on the entities themselves. And again, just as Hasidism preserved the kabbalistic-gnostic schemata on the outskirts of its teaching, and paid no heed to them in its central teaching, so it knows in its practice of the methods of intention, which can be learnt, it knows also of all kinds of kabbalistic-magical material, even to saving formulae and amulets, but its character asserts itself in factual and not rarely also in programmatical opposition to it. Against the kavanoth which can be known—in this and this way one should meditate, in this and this way one should recollect oneself—there rises up the one life-embracing kavanah of the man who gives himself up to God and his redeeming work. As Hasidism strove to overcome the division between the holy and the profane, so it also strove to overcome the emphasis on fixed procedures of intention among the fulness of the living

deed. Man does not truly engage in kavanah when he accompanies an act with an already known mystical method, he exercises kavanah when he accomplishes his act with the whole of his being directed towards God. What can be known beforehand is not made for giving the deed its living centre; for the sacramental act should not be accomplished with arbitrariness posing as originator, it is only done in connection with that which comes up to us, and as our counter-gesture. We cannot know beforehand what comes to meet us, God and the moment cannot be known before they appear, and the moment is God's garment; therefore we can indeed prepare ourselves for the act, but we cannot prepare the act itself. The substance of the act is ever supplied to us, or rather, it is offered us, by that which happens to us, which meets us—by everything which meets us. Everything desires to be hallowed, to be incorporated into the holy, everything in the world in its worldliness, it does not desire to be emptied of its worldliness, it desires to be hallowed in the kavanah of redemption in all its worldliness; everything desires to become a sacrament. The creature seeks us, the things seek us on our ways; what comes in our way needs us for its way. "With the board and with the bench" shall one pray; \* they desire to come to us, everything desires to come to us, everything desires to come to God through us. What concern of ours are the upper worlds, if they exist! Ours is "in this lower world, in this world of the body, to let the hidden life of God shine forth."

\* Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim* I (1948) p. 269.

## God and the Soul

A DEFINITION of mysticism is always open to question, if, as with any other religious teaching, it is made on the basis of subject matter or chief principle; for then we only have an idea or sentence that is at the same time abstract and somewhat vague, and that fails to comprehend what makes mysticism in its historical manifestations such a singular and remarkable type of religious life. We do better if we take as our starting point that experience of the soul, which is clearly common to all mystics, for they all speak of it in one way or another and, if only in a veiled reference or even in so objective an expression that the personal foundation, that very experience, does not come within our range of vision; here too are moments when a powerful recollection suddenly pulsates through the firm notes of the objective statement. Of course that experience may be called an experience of Unity; but once again we shall only have something abstract and indefinite, if we think merely of a contemplation of Unity, in which to be sure the one contemplating recedes, his essential position however, which he still feels to some extent in the midst of his experience, is no other than the essential position of all our human contemplation, the division of Being into the contemplating and

the contemplated. One of the greatest among the mystics, Plotinus, leaves much room for such a misunderstanding when, as a true Greek still in the late period of the fusion of all spiritual elements, he interprets that experience in visual language is the image of the eye contemplating the light. In Plotinus also we perceive on closer observation that this is only one, if also the thinnest, of the garments in which mystical experience cloaks itself so as to be able to reveal itself, or rather to enable the wearer to fit his experience into the framework of his inner life and then into the framework of his cognition. Indeed the crucial factor in that experience is not that the multiplicity of manifestations collapses into the one, that the interplay of colours gives place to the absoluteness of the white light, but that in the one contemplating the act of contemplation is obliterated; it is not the dissolution of phenomenal diversity but of constructive dualism, the dualism of the I experiencing and the object experienced, which is the crucial factor, the peculiarity of mysticism in the true sense. And indeed we can only speak of mysticism in the true sense where we are concerned, not with men in an early state of semi-consciousness preceding a clear distinction between subject and object, but with those to whom the fundamental position has become a matter of course: an I complete in itself and a world complete in itself facing one another. This fundamental dualism, itself perceived only slowly by the human spirit, is at certain moments in an individual life swept aside in favour of an overwhelming experience of union; this it is which excites that deep and ever-recurring awe which, though in varying degrees of expression, we find in all mystics.

In all mysticism, however, which springs from the soil of



the so-called theistic religions, there is an additional factor to which a specifically religious significance is to be attributed. Here the mystic is conscious of a close personal contact with God, and this contact has, it is true, as its goal a union with God, a union which is often felt and presented in images of the earthly Eros, but in this as in every contact between Being and Being it is the very dualism of these beings which is the primary condition of what is occurring between them. It is not the dualism of subject and object, i.e., neither is to the other merely an object of contemplation, itself having no part in the relationship, but it is the dualism of I and Thou, both entering into reciprocal relationship. However God be comprehended as an absolute Being, He is here not the whole, but the Facing, the One facing this man; He is what this man is not, and is not what this man is; it is precisely upon this that the longing for union can be based. In other words, in this close association experienced by the mystic, God, even if the mystic wants to be merged in Him, is and remains a Person. The I of the mystic seeks to lose itself in the Thou of God, but this Thou of God, or, after the I of the mystic has been merged therein, this absolute I of God cannot pass away. The man's "I am" shall perish, so that the "I am" of God remains alone. "Between me and thee," says al-Hallaj, the great martyr of Moslem mysticism, "there is an 'I am' that grieves me. Ah! through thy 'I am' take away my 'I am' from betwixt us both." The mystic never thinks of calling into question the personality of this divine "I am." "I call thee," says al-Hallaj, ". . . no, it is thou who callest me to thee! How could I have said to thee 'It is thou,' if thou hadst not whispered to me 'It is I.' " The I of the revealing God, the I of

the God Who accords to the mystic the intercourse with Him, and the I of God, in Whom the human I merges itself, are identical. The mystic remains in the sphere of intercourse, as he was in the sphere of revelation, a theist.

It is otherwise when mysticism, penetrating beyond the sphere of experienced intercourse, dares to deal with God as He is in Himself, that is beyond the relation to man, and indeed beyond the relation to the created world generally. Of course it knows well that, as the greatest thinker of western mysticism, Meister Eckhart, puts it, no one can really say what God is. But its conception of absolute unity, a unity therefore that nothing can face any more, is so strong that even the highest idea of the person must yield place to it. Unity which is in relationship to something other than itself is not perfect unity; and perfect unity can no more be personal. By that mysticism, sprung from the soil of a theistic religion, in no way means to deny the personal nature of the God; but it strives to raise that perfect unity, which is faced by nothing, above the God of revelation, and to differentiate between the Godhead abiding in pure being and the active God. Perfect unity merely *is*, it does not work. "Never," says Eckhart, "has the Godhead worked this or that, it is God Who creates all things." To that primal existence before the creation, to that unity transcending all dualism, the mystic strives finally to return; he wishes to become as he was before the creation.

Theistic mysticism does not always strain its conception of unity to the extreme of setting up thereby a dualism in the very being of God. Islamic mysticism avoids it by seeking to raise the attribute of work to an abstract height, where it is compatible with perfect unity. Certainly its suc-

cess here is only apparent, for it transfigures as it were mystically the monotheistic tradition of the active God, without allowing any of the work of the worker to penetrate the mystical sphere itself;—the one is directed towards the world, the other is essentially acosmic; the one displays God's doings in the community of mankind, the other is only acquainted with Him in His contacts with the soul; so Islamic mysticism, at the price of dividing religious life into two, achieves a questionable unity of God. Christian mysticism, in the best of its theology, proceeds here more boldly and more consistently. With unsurpassable precision it locates the tension in the divine itself. "God and Godhead," says Eckhart, "are as different as heaven and earth. . . . God becomes (wird) and vanishes (entwird)." So here "God" is the name of the Divine, in so far as from perfect unity, faced by nothing, It made Itself in creation and revelation the One facing the world, and thereby the partaker in Its becoming and vanishing. For "God" only exists for a world, by the Divine becoming its, the world's, God; when "world" becomes, God becomes; and if there is no world, God ceases to be, and again there is only Godhead.

Already here it can be seen that it would be a grave error to attribute to mysticism the view that the distinction between Godhead and God is only one of perspective, that is, one consisting not in itself but in the viewpoint of the world. Apart from all else such a view would nullify the historical revelation. Such is far from genuine theistic mysticism, which sees the distinction instead as founded in God's very being and consummated by Him.

Thus far has Christian mysticism proceeded with Eckhart, as Indian mysticism earlier in Śāṅkara; further it has

not attempted to penetrate. But by that an enigma that confronts us on the borderline of human being, at the point where it touches the Divine, has been only shifted into the Divine itself, and so for the time being withdrawn from further investigation. Not for ever; for there is in the history of later mysticism yet one more endeavour, even if only fragmentary and if apparently coming to a standstill in its very start, to penetrate still further and here again to ask "Why?" The question may be formulated provisionally thus: Why did God become Person? That Hasidism (and, so far as I can see, Hasidism alone) has ventured to attempt to answer this question—or rather, as will be shown, a related question—is indicated by the words of its greatest thinker, the Maggid of Mesritch, which we are able to extract from the notes of disciples and to some extent to put together. Here is one of the few points, in which Hasidic theology surpasses that of the later Kabbala, whose paths it follows here too, even if only gropingly.

## II

The idea of a self-limitation of God in the original act of creation is known to be a basic idea of the Kabbala. This follows naturally, when the concept of an emanation of worlds from God has replaced the concept of a creation of all things out of a "Nothing" facing God. World, be it even the most lofty, is by its nature limited; it is limited by the fact that, really or potentially, there exists an other than itself. But for this very reason even the first act of emanation limits God Himself. Admittedly He remains in Himself the limitless, but as there is now not anymore He Him-

self only, but also "world," even if only in the form of its first original "point," by the very fact that God in Himself makes the limited possible and actual, He limits Himself. It is not therefore that He is or could be limited by world or worlds, for in Himself He cannot be touched or circumscribed by any other; but in that He has "left free" the limited, He has brought about a self-limitation where the limited now is, and in so far as it is. (Naturally what we refer to here as unlimited and limited should not be confused with notions of spatial infinity and finiteness, for space as such is first established in creation; and similarly the use of terms of time, inevitable in human speech when speaking of the act of creation, must not be taken to imply that this occurred in time, which rather was first established thereby; the self-limitation in fact proceeds not in time, but in eternity).

The motive given by the later Kabbala for the primary act of divine self-limitation is however of great importance: there arises in God's will—as Chaim Vital expresses it in the famous opening of his "Tree of Life"—the desire to create the world, in order to benefit His creatures. For God to be able to actualise His kindness, there must be something other than Himself, something outside Himself, which He can benefit. Here we see the fundamental difference from the teaching of Spinoza. He was obliged to withhold all personality from God; the love of this God, in which His being of necessity culminated, could not be love towards another but only the all-embracing love of the Unlimited for itself. The Kabbala does not shrink from seeing already in the "Godhead" something, which first reaches its full development in the action of "God": kindness; and for this

development there is need of an other, who needs the kindness. Already the "Godhead" desires to give Itself out of kindness, it longs for a recipient of its "light." And so the self-limitation continues, for the world is not in a state to receive the fullness of divine light, and "on account of His great love," as the Maggid of Mesritch' says, God limits His illuminating power further. Just so "Godhead" becomes "God," and in Hasidism as already before it is the former that is designated by the Tetragrammaton, which is originally by far the more personal of the two names: ever more strongly does the pure Being break through in it. "One receives," says the Maggid, "the light of the sun only through a curtain, so one could only receive the illuminating power of Being\* through Elohim." This also is no new image; but it stands in a new connection which makes it new. The Godhead makes a world emanate, so as to bring into operation what in It is person, the personal kindness, the personal desire to give; and in order that this world may receive that which It desires to give from Itself, Godhead becomes God to it altogether. The Maggid goes so far as to designate the self-limitation itself with the name of "God," and to explain the opening words of the text "In the beginning created God" in the footsteps of the Kabbala as meaning that Godhead "in the beginning" made Itself into God.

If however, according to traditional esoteric doctrine, the God working in nature, confining Himself within her limits, is called Elohim, how is it then to be understood from Hasidism that the Scripture designates the God manifesting Himself and working in Israel with the original name

\* "Being," HaVaYah, is here treated as the same as YHVH, the "Being One."

of Godhead, the Tetragrammaton? Not only creation, but also revelation, is a descent of the Godhead. But it is no real self-limitation: here it is the God Who has not entered the world, the Unlimited, the bearer of limitless light, the Godhead, the pure Being, Who is at work; and even this, the absolute Godhead, works as a person. In order to understand this, we must call to mind the significance which, within the world creation, is attached to the formation of man, and within the human race to the people of Israel, and within Israel to the Zaddik.

That the worlds were unable to receive the limitless light and that God therefore limited it, does not mean in any way that He thereupon renounced winning the recipient for it. In order to win him He creates man, who through his sins forfeits becoming the recipient of limitless light; and now He lets Israel come into existence in the midst of mankind. To give him the light as Word, "YHVH descends to Mount Sinai." This working from love, says the Maggid of Mesritch, is in fact a descent of God. But what He reveals to the people of Israel as Torah is in its essence the limitless light itself. Israel pledges itself to Him, but it too proves not able truly and fully to receive it. Now God waits with His hidden limitless light for the recipient. God desires that Israel should become Zaddikim, that is recipients, for "the desire of the cow to suckle is greater than the desire of the calf to suck." Hence God practises in every generation not a real but only an apparent and temporary limitation of illuminating power. In this He acts like a father, who, in order that his small son may learn to understand him more and more and at last completely, begins by apparently limiting his own understanding and by becoming

a child for the sake of the child. In countless variations this simile recurs in the sayings of the Maggid in order to show how this second pedagogic self-limitation is related to the first cosmogonic one. And God's plan succeeds: the Zaddik arises. He presses forward to God through all worlds, and receives His light. As man the zaddik is what any man as such is, "dam," blood, but because he clings to Him Who is "alufo-shel-olam," the prince of the world, and so the divine principle is united with his blood, there comes from the letter "Alef" and the word "dam" in truth Adam: the true man, the recipient of the limitless light, has arisen.

As we have seen the distinction here is not, as in Indian and Christian mysticism, between a super-personal inactive Godhead and a personal active God, and yet we do not fall behind these, but rather, out of the ideas inherent in Jewish tradition and especially in the Kabbala, we have gone beyond them in a highly significant point. A distinction is being made within the divine activity, in that the self-imparting of God to His recipient, the revelation, is distinguished from all other, from all natural acts of God: the One, Who imparts Himself, is not the God in the self-limitation, Whose act determines the worlds, Elohim, but the limitless original Godhead Itself. The imparting may indeed use self-limitation by the way, until, henceforth freed from all need of limitation, it reaches its true recipient, but the One imparting Himself has in no way thereby limited Himself, has not as there made Himself into world or worlds, but while at times limiting His illuminating power in order to win His recipient, He has remained untransformed within Himself, without allowing Himself to bear a trace of the world. Here we are confronted by a paradoxical



activity that does not undermine the original divine absoluteness. The distinction here is not, as in the mysticism of Śankara and Eckhart, between a Godhead resting within Itself and an active personal God, but almost the contrary, between the original Godhead designated by the Tetragrammaton, which desires to impart Itself directly, and in order to do this brings about the self-limitation in Elohim, the creation, and on the other hand that One, Elohim, Who in the entire fullness of nature in its widest sense works in all worlds what has been worked, creates, and animates. The recipient of YHVH arises through Elohim; but it is YHVH Himself, Who leads him on until he becomes truly a recipient, and this leading is again nothing else than an impartation, an indirect impartation, but ever becoming more direct. Of the two, Elohim is the impersonal figure of God, that may be compared, if one wishes, with Spinoza's *natura naturans*; but here before and over this there stands the original Godhead, the "Being," and it is at one and the same time the complete unity and the limitless person. "Esse est Deus," says Eckhart, and that can also be said here, but here Being includes Person, that is to say person in the paradoxical sense, the limitless, the absolute person. Not the Zimzum, the self-limitation, but the limitless original Godhead Itself, the Being, speaks the "I" of revelation.

The question from which we set out, the question at which Indian and Christian mysticism have remained stationary, and beyond which Hasidism has penetrated further, is accordingly not to be formulated as we expressed it in the first instance: "Why did God become Person?" but it has split into a double question. The first runs approximately: "Why has the limitless Godhead become the God,

Who wanders limited through the worlds and in their limitation carries out the work of His creation?" And the second: "Why has the limitless Godhead from being an absolute person, faced by nothing, become one faced by a recipient?" To the first the Kabbala gave the answer: From kindness. To the second Hasidism answers: From longing for a recipient, upon whom It, the Godhead, could bestow Its light. Both answers are one. The reality of God's way is to be understood from the reality of His will to show love.

From this view, that the limitless original Godhead Itself is the God of revelation, is also to be understood a fundamental conception of Hasidism, finding expression with the utmost imagery in the words of the Maggid, and often misunderstood as "pantheistic" (as indeed especially in the realm of living religion such simplifying categories are for the most part misunderstandings). I mean the view that has developed the conception of the presence of God within us to sensible fullness.\* Man is visited by divine power or substance in two ways: as creature by the creative power of Elohim, which lends him his strength, and as person by the settling down of the Shekhinah, which, when it comes, raises him above himself. The first kind is constitutive and stable, the second gracious and unforeseeable, the former can be compared with the hidden water of a spring which passes through the earth and from there keeps the ground moist and fruitful, and the latter with the fertilizing rain, which "descends to the earth and causes the grain to grow." We are surrounded on all sides by the creative power of God, which comprehends and upholds the creation; but we our-

\* I take no account of the doctrine of the "sparks" in the following pages, an appropriate treatment of this being found in other parts of this book.

selves also are penetrated by it as it has entered into the creation: "We proceed in the Creator, blessed be He, and without His outpouring and power of life we can make no movement." Through Him we live in the strictest sense, because He lives in us: God "lives within the limbs of man from the head to the sole of the foot." What we do we do by the strength of God; only the use, the direction, that which we make out of the divine power, lies within our will, we can pull it down to the vulgar level, and we can, mindful of its essence and origin, direct it unto heaven. And if a man with the gathered strength of his soul turns himself towards heaven, and the mere creaturely strength does not suffice to bear the surrender of himself above, then so soon as he has just said "Lord, open my lips," the Shekhinah, which stays with us in exile, clothes Herself in him, and speaks the words Herself, and in them She soars up towards Her "Spouse." But here too we must keep well in mind that our human element should be equal to the communion with the Shekhinah and not draw Her down; for well it raises us in the word "from sanctuary to sanctuary," but in each one sentence is passed on us.

Here it is clear that God demands from us what He demands, not as Elohim, but as YHVH, that is in His original Being. The Godhead as a perfect unity, God before and above creation, is at the same time the ruling God. For even He is the kind One, Who created the worlds to actualise His kindness; He is the great lover, Who has placed man in the world that He might be able to love him,—but there is no perfect love without reciprocity, and He, the original God, longs thereafter that man should love Him. Everything follows from this; all teaching, all "moral-

ity," for in the innermost kernel nothing is desired from above, nothing is demanded of us, but love of God. Everything follows therefrom; for man cannot love God in truth without loving the world, in which He has put His strength and over which His Shekhinah rests. People who love each other with holy love bring each other towards the love with which God loves His world.

In Hasidism—and in it alone, so far as I can see, in the history of mankind—has mysticism become Ethos. Here the original mystical unity, to which the soul desires to ascend, is no other form of God than the demander of the demand, and the mystical soul cannot become real, if it is not one with the moral soul.

# Love of God and Love of One's Neighbour

## I

THE AGE OLD controversy between religion and ethics which has persisted to this day, has two main aspects, according to which element takes the lead at any particular period. Generally speaking, a lead on the side of ethics reduces the controversy to the problem: Heteronomy or autonomy? Religion on the other hand, when taking the lead, has in general the aim of establishing its preponderance. I can see no just solution, as so often, except by crediting and discrediting both simultaneously. This would call for a rigid demarcation between right and wrong.

Is one to do good because it has been thus ordained by the gods, or simply because it is good? This is what ethics wants to know. Religion, on the other hand, asks: Should one preoccupy oneself with doing good, as such, at all, or should one's concern be to carry out whatever God may order? The first question distinguishes only between two motives for one and the same moral act, and seeks to ascertain which is the right one of the two. The second question distinguishes essentially between two types of acts and wants to know which is the superior one, though insisting, as is in the fundamental interest of religion, that the motive be "for the sake of God." In other words, the first question leaves it

in abeyance whether, according to the content of our deeds, a complete harmony between religion and ethics be at all possible; the second question aims at a possible conflict between the two, in which it seeks to secure a preponderance for the first. In the last account it becomes apparent that both questions start out from a false conception of both religion and ethics.

Man either believes in a commanding and postulating God, or does not believe in such a God (it being this distinction and not the one between "believer" and "unbeliever" which concerns us here). As for the person who does not hold this belief, ethics is obviously unequivocally right; he can and has to do good just because it is good. Ethics is right, if it places over against the religious position the good man, that does not believe in a commanding and postulating God. Good acts are obviously none the less good for being practised out of a personal insight, a personal emotional drive or a personal trial of conscience. Beyond this point, however, the problematics in the existence of this man begins. If he is a religious man, then there is no connection, strictly speaking, between his isolated ethical life and his isolated religious life: they are subject to a different law; his life has no elemental wholeness. A different relationship exists in the a-religious man. Not only can he excel in all other respects, but he can even possess the wholeness of personal life, which the former lacks; but he is not concerned with the wholeness of being, that is to say: his own life is isolated from the wholeness of being. This, of course, is a point that can be understood only by the religious man, for here lies the dividing line of conceptional understanding between him and the a-religious man, and the

latter cannot be blamed for refuting the criticism as being illusionary. However, in both cases ethics must be credited in respect of its postulate of autonomy.

What then of the man who believes in a commanding and postulating God? Let us anticipate a class which is specifically significant in our time. The man who does not believe that he knows for certain, by force of tradition, what God commands him for his life, but who regards the revelation transmitted to him as a fusion of the divine and the human, in which the human factor gradually gains ground during the process of transmission, whereas the divine factor directly reveals itself as such only in moments of personal enlightenment and only for certain biographical situations,—that man does indeed live in constant “fear and trembling.” Fundamentally the problem of autonomy and heteronomy does not indeed exist for him, as he knows that if he were in complete harmony with his God then that which is His will would burn within his heart and there would be no more difference between “from hence” and “from thence”; but in effect his life is filled with a duality which somehow corresponds to the former. True, he perceives a divine call on his person in all things and occurrences, but in general no guide is hereby given to him as to what his duty to God may be in any particular time and situation; most often he is confronted so to say with a question which he has to meet by his own action and inaction. Whatever he may lay hold of or conclude or decide, he draws from his “conscience,” from the primeval vigilance of his soul, from such a depth in the unity source of the person where the self and the world and the relationship between them, as it is on that day, can be tried and clarified. But conscience,

even with the greatest possible concentration of the innermost powers, has not always assurance; after all, this man knows that he cannot objectively and reliably know whether that which he intends to do is the correct answer to the problem presented to him,—whether it is the correct completion of the circle drawn. At times he does indeed act as with full power, but at other times he feels completely forsaken, life unfolding itself between these two states of mind. He must seek help: from the traditional “word of God” as it discloses itself to him, in order that the divine element therein may strike him in the soul, and from any such good and helpful spirit which is in contact with the Spirit Divine. But above all he must beg God Himself for help by offering to Him in prayer all the fruits of his conscience that He may either accept or reject them. But what if after having exhausted all, he has yet not gained assurance? Well, then he lives through these moments daringly, in fear and trembling.

Now against this solitary and exposed man let us set as the supreme example of religious stability upon whose horizon it seems that the mere shadow of the Autonomy problem can never appear, a religious community (here it becomes beside the point to think about an individual) which lives in an unshaken and to all appearances unshakable assurance that is imparted to the community by the tradition alive within it,—in an assurance which has assumed the form of a higher nature and of a supreme selfevident truth. Yet, within their life, religiously determined as a whole, there is a dividing line between a religious sphere, in the restricted sense of the word, comprising cult and ritual, and an ethical sphere. What the two have in common is that their laws



and regulations are derived from divine authority and that behaviour, in conformity with, or opposition to, these laws and regulations, is subject to divine sanction.

Nevertheless, even within the religious domain in the restricted sense, there stirs a tendency which in a particular way is reminiscent of the tendency towards moral autonomy, though it be remote from it.

There is now a desire to observe the customs of divine service and prescribed forms of life not merely because these things have been ordered; people want to express in them their own religious conviction; they wish to carry out these acts as acts religious in themselves by intention and content, and the fact of their being ordered, inasmuch as it constitutes a motive, can thereby recede to the point where the primary sensation is that He who commands has shown the people the way in which to give expression and satisfaction to their own religious desire, the desire for proximity to God and preparedness for Him.

In the other, the ethical domain, a corresponding tendency assumes importance in a different way, though frequently none the less marked. We are commanded to honour our parents; but for the reverent man, in doing this, an inwardness manifests itself out of the very basis of life. We are forbidden to bear false witness; but for the honest man truth is not merely, as it is called in Jewish tradition, the Seal of God,—it is the treasure of his own soul. We are commanded to love our neighbour; but is love genuine if it does not spring from the heart? From above and from within simultaneously: that all that has been commanded from above may spring from within as a desire and an emotion,—this is the attitude, at which the tendency ultimately

aims. It is in the measure in which the divine fire, radiating in infinite remoteness and majesty over man, is kindled in the innermost cell of his self,—in the measure, that is, in which the “Image of God” becomes concrete reality, that the difference between heteronomy and autonomy is lifted into a higher unity, even within the community living in the certitude of tradition. It is only at this stage, where the religious principle has embodied the ethical, without encroaching upon the latter’s inherent power, into its own substance of life, that the supremacy of the religious principle is incontestable.

This is, however, by no means the highest stage. For here the two domains, the religious in the restricted sense and the ethical, are still in kind separated from one another within the collective life of the religious community. Both, it is true, are derived from and related to God’s command, yet the former still claims precedence as a whole, if not in all its component parts. But the distinction between the ethical and the religious elements does not hold after an inner crisis has been undermining the foundations—the very certitude that it is the Will of God that men live thus and not differently—and after a movement has been promoted in the community with the object of overcoming this crisis and of re-establishing a clear and distinct form of life “in the presence of God.” For the purposes of this movement, the ethical practices must, by virtue of their essence and effect, become religious practices, consequently not just appertaining to religion as having been commanded by God, but an inseparable ingredient of its germinal substance as such, an ingredient not less important than the rest. They must become religious practices of such a significance that this rest, the above mentioned “religious element in the restricted

sense" cannot exist without them. The primordial intention of the religious community, the realisation of "Holiness" in the entire breadth and fulness of the collective life, is now to be accomplished, this accomplishment is now beginning. The "ethical" element is now no longer a matter between men, having the protection and sanction of the religious authorities; it is a matter between man and God not less than the religious element in the restricted sense. Both types of practices, ritual as well as moral, are, according to their meaning, directed towards God Himself; through both contact with Him is maintained; both influence the Unity between the divine Powers and Forms. Here the isolated religious element has dwindled away as well as the isolated ethical element. You cannot truly love God if you do not love your fellow man, and you cannot truly love your fellow man if you do not love God.

This is the stage which Hasidism has reached, though the new mode of life instituted by it remained fragmentary and transitory. One must have essential intercourse only with God, says Kierkegaard. It is impossible, says Hasidism, to have truly essential intercourse with God when there is no essential intercourse with men.

## II

For a spiritual movement that does not strive for the realisation of an idea but for the renewal of the mode of life it is significant how its ideal concept of man is related to the generally cherished and praised human qualities. The Hasidic attitude can be illustrated by the sayings of three Zaddikim, each saying being kindred to the other, yet re-

taining its special note and making its special contribution; and furthermore, when regarded one beside the other, they reveal a clear line of development. The point in question is a judgment on the three qualities: wisdom, piety and goodness. Rabbi Pinhas of Korez, a man of the first hasidic generation, of remarkable straightforwardness in outlook and speech, is content with setting up a scale of values for the three. "Being pious," says he, "I prefer to being clever, but I prefer being good to being clever and to being pious." At first sight it appears that ethics is given here preference over religion; but on closer examination of the concepts employed (as they appear in the original Yiddish) according to their general linguistic implications, it will be noticed that what is meant by "pious" is the religious specification, that is the religious element in isolation, whereas "good" signifies the man who while seeking to fulfil the Will of God on His creatures deals lovingly with the world. The isolated religious attitude was known to Hasidism in its own environment in the form of the devotees who were only concerned with their relation to God Himself, whereas the isolated ethical attitude did not exist in this environment and was consequently not taken into consideration. A very concise sentence, originating from the school of Karlin, whose most prosperous period falls into the third and fourth generations of the movement, brings us somewhat further. It runs as follows: "Cleverness without heart is nothing; pious means false." What is here termed "heart" is evidently nothing else, fundamentally, than the above mentioned "goodness," without which all intellectual excellence is void. The second part of the sentence stands out for its trenchancy. What is implied is clear: An immediate rela-

tion to God which does not embody an immediate relation to the world is self-deception if not deception; if you turn away from the world in order to turn to God, then you are not concentrating on the reality of God but merely on your own idea of Him. The religious element in isolation is not really the religious element. But now comes the third saying which exposes the perversity of all isolated qualities, criticising also, in a manner worthy of note, the validity of isolated goodness; for we are now in the sixth Hasidic generation, and the period of Enlightenment had in the meantime furnished Eastern European Jewry with a new form of isolated ethics, and in addition the originator of the maxim, the wise Rabbi Bunam, must surely have learnt other forms of isolated ethics in the course of his travels abroad. The saying runs thus: "If someone is merely good, he is a debauched lover; if he is merely pious, he is a thief; if he is merely clever, he is a disbeliever. Only when a person has all these three qualities combined, is he capable of serving God completely." Whoever surrenders himself to his fellow men in a vague kind of love, without shape and order, without accepting from belief and wisdom, from wisdom derived from belief, meaning and connection for his love, will quite easily be the worse off on account of either, losing himself in bewilderment over one of those elements like one debauched. Whoever desires to confine himself to an emotional relationship to God, without perceiving the living world about him and without recognizing the life therein, robs mankind of what is due to it and thus surely also of what belongs to it. And he who exercises his spirit only and thinks about nothing else, who is attached to God and the world only by the external ties of traditionally transmitted

religion and morals, but knows neither piety nor goodness, will pretty soon lose even that weak hold which those external ties provide. Whatever is isolated is confusing. Wholeness alone is reliable and leads man to salvation.

As far as a scale of values has been set up in these sayings, the ethical element has been in the first place: he who is only "good" is more likely to achieve what he lacks than he who is only pious or indeed he who is only clever. A similar evaluation of the ethical confronts us when instead of the qualities as such, we discuss the place of the love of God and the love of one's neighbor in the development of the truly religious individual. Here it becomes perfectly clear that the true love of men, in the eyes of Hasidism, is no longer a detached ethical attitude, but a religious one in that actual sense,—indeed that in the evolution of the individual it is upon this attitude that religious life can most readily be built. A Zaddik asked a pupil: "When a Jew arises from bed in the morning and has to choose instantly between two ways, love of God and love of one's neighbor, which should go before the other?" The pupil did not know so the Zaddik explained: "In the Prayer Book it is said, before you say your prayers, you have to recite the verse: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' The real love of God should begin with the love of men. And if someone should tell you that he has love of God but has no love of men, then know that he is lying." It is noteworthy that despite the sentence, condemning bare goodness, it is never suggested, as far as I can see, that nobody can experience love for men without experiencing love for God; the former is always regarded as the basis, though only through love for God love for men can reach

its perfection. A complaint was brought before a grandson of the "Holy Yehudi" (a Zaddik of the seventh generation) by a merchant against another merchant who had opened up a business near his own and so diminished his earnings. "Why," said the Zaddik, "do you thus attach yourself to your own business from which you earn your livelihood? Surely, what matters, is to pray to the One Who nourishes and keeps you! Don't you know where he dwells? Well, it says in the Book: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself, I am the Lord.' Just love him, your neighbor, and wish that he may also have what he needs,—there, in that love, you will find the Lord."

Whereas in another passage in Scripture it is commanded to love God and hence also the sojourner, because he is loved by God, here the reverse way is indicated. The two of them together are the truth. For each of the two kinds of love, in its state of truth, requires the other for the sake of its wholeness and stimulates the other. But what is important is that in Hasidism it is the way from the World to God which is repeatedly pointed to as the standard way for individual development.

We are taken a step further by a saying of a pupil of the "Seer" of Lublin, a Zaddik of the fourth generation. It is a naive utterance, but a profound truth is concealed in its naivety. This one also opens with the verse "Love thy neighbour as thyself, I am the Lord." "For," it goes on, "as we teach the child the consonants and vowels first of all, and then we teach him how to combine them into words, so every one in Israel is, as it were, one of the letters of the Law and his soul is a divine particle from above, and he who loves one of Israel acquires such a particle, and when

he is graced with loving another and yet another, he acquires more and more, and when he is graced with loving all Israel, then he attains to the Almighty, the God of the World, the Lord." The actual meaning of this sentence arises out of its conclusion: only he who learns to love men one by one reaches, in his relation to Heaven, God as the God of all the World. He who does not love the world can only refer, in his relationship to God, to an equally solitary God or to the God of his own soul. For he learns to love the God of the Universe, the God who loves His world, only in the measure in which he himself learns to love the world. Thus we may regard as being the decisive way for the development of the individual the way proceeding from love of men to love of God, not in the sense that one has to go that way and not the other, but rather that the living man of faith must go either way again and again. His love over and over again contracts now in this now in that direction, and over and over again it has to expand and to renew itself; yet the pedagogically decisive way is from "below" "upward." A man came to a Zaddik and asked: "I have heard that you give out effective medicines; then please let me have a remedy to attain the fear of God." The Zaddik answered: "I have no remedy for the attainment of the fear of God, but I have one for the attainment of the love of God." "Why, that is even a higher stage," replied the other, "do give me the remedy." Said the Zaddik: "The remedy for the attainment of the love of God is love of Israel. Whoever has love for Israel can easily rise to the love of God."

Close though the "ethical" element here may have come to the "religious," in its fundamental importance to the



latter, there yet prevails a difference of quality and scope. This gap had to be bridged; and bridged it has been.

A Zaddik of the third generation, one of the greatest of the Mezritch school, Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg, was asked by a pupil: "How can I fulfil the commandment 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' if my neighbour does me evil?" He replied: "It happens that a man strikes himself by mistake. Is he then to take a rod and thrash himself as punishment? Why, you and your companion are one in soul, and if he in his ignorance did you evil, would you retaliate and bring harm to yourself?" But the pupil went on asking: "And if I see someone who is wicked before God, how can I love him?" The Zaddik replied: "The soul of every man is a divine particle from above. Even so you have to show pity to God when one holy spark of His has been trapped in a shell." Herewith the decisive step has been taken. For as the primeval source of the Deity is linked up with all its soul-sparks which are dispersed throughout the world, so whatever we do to our fellow-men is bound up with what we do to God. The "ethical" acts are by virtue of their meaning and essence just as much religious acts as are the "religious" ones. As for the effect, there is the saying of one of the most serious Hasidic thinkers, R. Joseph of Olesk, also a pupil of the Maggid of Mezritch who says: "So long as groundless hate exists, so that a person will not look at the other with friendly countenance, it brings about the concealment of the Supreme Countenance on High. But where love reigns with candid countenance, it will be brought about that 'the Glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together'." Redemption is dependent on the unification of the human world, for this unification is the

unification of the divine Substance, which is cast into the world. The genuinely moral deed is done to God.

Thus it is self-evident that the "ethical" acts are placed on a common footing with "religious" acts. So the "Seer" of Lublin, when he had not merely personally served a poor traveller with his meal, but thereafter even cleared away the dishes and he was asked why he should thus trouble himself, replied: "Surely, carrying the vessels out of the Holy of Holies was part of the duty of the High Priest!" If this can still be understood as mere parallelism of speech and as similes, then the intrinsic unity of both domains and the religious character common to both find their expression in an almost coarse jest of Rabbi Mordechai of Neshiz, one of the earlier Zaddikim. In his youth he had run a business and used to put aside a small amount of the profit made on each commercial tour, in order to purchase at the end of the year a fine etrog\* for the blessing on the feast of Tabernacles. Once, on his way to the town, where he intended to select the fruit, he came across a water-carrier who was weeping and wailing because his only horse had died. The Rabbi gave him the money saved for the ritual purpose, so that the man might buy himself another horse. And when asked whether it was not with great sorrow that he practised such self-denial, he said: "What does it matter? Everybody pronounces the benediction over the etrog, and I pronounce it over the purchased horse."

A God who participates truthfully in the fate of His creation so that for its sake He parts with his Shekhinah and makes His reunion therewith dependant on the unification of His creation, cannot—thus teaches Hasidism—suffer men

\* The fruit of citrus medica.

to discriminate fundamentally between Heaven and Earth in their lives and their conduct.

### III

It has yet to be shown by some sentences and tales (a selection of some particularly typical ones, from out of a very much larger store) how this integration of the ethical into the religious element finds its expression in the life of the true hasid in the practice of love. Some of it is reminiscent of more ancient reports, but it is not the detail that counts here, it is the wealth and power of the whole which knows of no equal.

We start from the view which we found in the above mentioned parable of Rabbi Shmelke about the man who strikes himself. It is a principle of identification worthy of being placed beside the Indian "Tat twam asi." A saying dating back to the Baalshem himself as again related to the commandment to love the neighbour "as thyself": "For every man in Israel has a root in the Unity, and therefore we may not reject him 'with both hands,' for whoever rejects his companion rejects himself; to reject the minutest particle of the Unity is to reject it all." For the sake of clearness I put beside this saying a robust and popular parable derived from the school of Rabbi Yechiel-Michal of Zlotchov. Once more, a man comes complaining before a Zaddik—this time the Zaddik is a somewhat rude jester who even clothes his exhortations in a jest, Rabbi Meir of Pshemyslany,—that someone is depriving him of his livelihood. "Have you ever seen," said the Zaddik, "a horse drinking from a brook? It kicks with its hoofs, does it not?"

Why? Well, it sees its reflection and takes it for another horse trying to drink away its water. But you ought to know that it is you all the time: you are standing in your own way."

The high-strung postulate of identification is entirely reconcilable, in Hasidism, with the insight into the special character of the relation of every man to himself, but even the problematics peculiar to this relationship is clearly recognized. It is just out of this problematics that new aspects of the commandment of love are gained. I quote two sayings which appear to be mutually contradictory, but which actually complement each other. The Baalshem explains the commandment as follows. "It is up to you to love your neighbour as much as you love yourself, and who is to know your many shortcomings as well as you yourself? As you still manage to love yourself, so you must love your neighbour despite all the shortcomings you may find in him." And a Zaddik of the fifth generation said of himself: "How can I fulfil the commandment of love, if I do not love myself and cannot even bear to look at myself? What can I do? I practise repentance until I can bear to look at myself again. Even so I must do to my neighbours." Here two men of varying grades face each other. The one does not permit knowledge of his inward defects to prevent him from paying his person the loving attention apparently natural to men; to the other, the aspect of his own soul as it happens to be is an unsurmountable obstacle against loving himself, he can only overcome it by purifying, changing himself—by "turning"—incidentally, a concept in Jewish tradition highly characteristic of the fusion of the ethical with the religious element. Does this mean that he cannot in any circumstance

contrive to love the imperfect and so not even his fellow-men, until they too have done repentance? But surely, it is evident that just by love he can assist the others to repent, teach and advise them. The deeper significance of the saying is that the Zaddik, who, by truthful turning to God attains a stage where he loves himself in God, i.e. in perfection, can help a man who confides in him to love himself even so, that is, truthfully, instead of the deceptive perspective of egoism.

At this point already the love-factor begins to penetrate from the realm of individual relationship between man and man in the relationship with the community. Whatever the Zaddik accomplishes in each individual he accomplishes in the coherence of the Whole. "And this is the work of the candlestick," quotes a hero of suffering and master of prayer in the fourth generation, the Maggid of Koznitz, from the instructions for the preparation of the vessels in the holy tent "a solid work of gold from its shaft to its flower," and Israel including the apostates, 'that no rejected person be rejected by him'—from the beginning to the end down to the very lowest, all one solid work and complete unity, and the rectification should be made on all, for they are all divine particles from above." Each rectification which the Zaddik achieves on the individual, he achieves on the whole of Israel, which is the true candlestick that beams up unto Heaven and lightens the earth.

Out of this conception of the whole, which recurs in Hasidic literature in innumerable teachings, parables and examples of individual cases a peculiar outlook can be detected, which occurs clearly enough even in the first generations and has not been further elaborated since. It is the idea of the "loving more." Originating from the Baalshem,

it gained a foothold in Rabbi Pinhas of Koretz and his school. It is reported of the Baalshem, that he ordered a Hasid whose son had fallen among the disbelievers, to love him more than hitherto, and this surplus of love is said to have returned the young man to the community. The following teaching originates from Rabbi Pinhas. "If someone despises and harms you, you should fortify yourself and love him more than before. By such love you make him turn to God. Therefore the wicked must also be loved, only their doings are to be hated." And the most genuine pupil of Rabbi Pinhas (of whom the story is related that death came over him one night as he lay on the ground being unable to decide concerning a man whether to give him away before court, or to tell a falsehood, and saw no other way out than death), Rabbi Raphael of Bershad used to teach: "If a man notices that his neighbour hates him, he should love him the more; and the meaning of it is: the whole of Israel is a vehicle of holiness, and if love and unity prevail among them, then the Shekhinah and the holiness rest upon them; if, however, there is, which God forbid, a split,—then a rent is formed and an opening, and the holiness falls down into the shells. "So where too little loving is done in one place, it becomes necessary to love all the more in another place in order to effect a levelling and thus restore the entirety of the 'vehicle.' The world below bears the Divine only when it coheres as an entirety and every man for his own part can contribute to the preservation of this entirety. And the same principle of "loving more" operates right into the intimacy of interpersonal life. A pupil of Rabbi Raphael relates: "During the summer-journey the Rabbi called me and asked me to come and sit beside him in his carriage. I

said: 'I fear, I may leave you little room'; then he said to me in a particularly affectionate manner: 'let us love each other more, and then there will be plenty of room for both of us.' " The feeling of being cramped in the human world is derived from inadequate love.

What is important is not a general, impersonal sort of love; it has to be quite concrete, direct and effective. No example shows so clearly what is wanted as that well known and popular tale, passed on from the mouth of a great lover and helper, Rabbi Moshe Leyb of Sasov. He is supposed to have himself related (I have chosen the most popular and complete of all the current versions), how he sat among a crowd of peasants in a village inn and overheard their conversation; he heard one asking the other: "Do you like me?" and the other replying: "Why, certainly, I like you very much." But the former looked at him gloomily and rebuked him for such words. "How can you say you like me? Do you know my shortcomings?" The other was silent, and thus they sat facing each other in silence, as there was nothing left to be said. He who loves truly, knows from the depth of his identity with his neighbour, from the very foundations of his neighbour's being he knows, wherein his friend is wanting. That alone is love.

And how is this attained? One must, taught the Baalshem in a badly preserved parable commenting on the verse of the Proverbs "As in water face to face, so the heart of man to man"—bow down low towards one's neighbour as when someone wants to approach his reflection in the water and bows down low so that it comes towards him until his head touches the water and he sees nothing more because both have become the one that they really are; so does man's

heart come to man, and not just this one to that one, but all to all. So is the "humble" Moses said to have bowed down to the "earth's surface" and mutual love to have inspired the whole of Israel. The same truth is presented from a different angle and with a similar reference to the humility of Moses, by an early Zaddik of the third generation. Every man, he taught, was more important to Moses than he himself, "and this was his service, to bring Israel also to the stage where everyone should love his neighbour by being inferior in his own eyes, and his neighbour superior to him. . . . And this is the meaning of what is written: 'When Moses held up his hand,' that is his power and rank which was the quality of true humility; then the quality of humility also prevailed throughout Israel and then every man thought of the preference of the other and of his own lowliness and loved his neighbour with perfect love, and thereby did they vanquish Amalek," that is, the force of evil.

And again the ethical wholly penetrates the religious. The "holy Yehudi" and his friends were fond of drawing an analogy between the association of two Jews standing side by side on an equal footing, drinking each other's health with cheer and love, and that of two "yoods" which are the smallest letters in the Alphabet, no more than tiny dots, though when placed side by side they express the name of God; if, however, two little dots are placed one above the other, then they merely signify a pause. Where two are side by side on an equal footing and are fond of each other without any reservation, there is God.

In the face of this great significance of being on an equal footing with one another the differences in value between men fade away. Not only is there in everybody a



divine particle, but there is in everybody one peculiar to him, to be found nowhere else. "In every man," says Rabbi Pinhas, "there is a precious substance, which is in nobody else." The individuality and irreplaceability of every human soul is a basic teaching of Hasidism. In His Creation God has in mind an infinitude of unique entities, and within it He has in mind every single one, without exception, as endowed with a particular faculty, a value which none other possesses; everyone has in the eyes of God a specific importance in the fulfilment of which none can compete with him, and to everyone He is devoted with a particular love, having regard to the treasurable value hidden in him. There are, of course, men great and small, in wisdom rich and poor, adorned by virtues and seemingly lacking in virtues, some devoted to God and others wrapped up in themselves, but God never withholds His grace even from those who are decried as being foolish or wanton. Rabbi Pinhas compares this with a prince who, in addition to his magnificent palaces, also owns all kinds of tiny cottages, each hidden away in some wood or village, where he calls occasionally when hunting or in order to take recreation. And it is not pertinent to say that the large palaces should rightly be there, and not the little cottages, because, as the saying goes, "The purpose served by the unimportant one cannot be served by the important." "This also holds true for the righteous man. Certainly his virtue and his service are immeasurably great, and yet he cannot accomplish what the wicked man accomplishes." So the man who wishes to tread in the path of God must not turn relative differences into absolute ones. The Maggid of Koznitz, quoting the above parable of Rabbi Pinhas, extends the maxim of the Mishnah "despise no man" not only

to the ignorant but also to the wicked and mean. For, as the Mishnah says: "There is no man who has not his own hour." "Even the wicked man has his own hour, when he devotes himself to the Creator," though he may only speak "one word" to Him "in perfection," "for not as chaos did He create him." Were there no such moment in the life of the most wicked, he would not have been created at all. And it is to this moment, this single holy word, this single holy act, that God looks forward. How could man forget this! He must not be fastidious where God is not so. It is related of the Rabbi of Sassow that at midnight, when he was deep in the study of the Law, a drunken peasant rapped at his window and demanded admittance. At first the Rabbi was annoyed at the interruption, but then he remembered: "If God suffers him in His world, then he must needs be there; therefore I too must suffer him in my world." He let him in and prepared a bed for him. On another occasion he was reproached with having given some infamous person all the money he possessed. "I also am not good," he said, "and yet God gives me whatever I need."

God wastes His love even on the most wicked; how then may man manage his own with rigid accounting according to honour and merit! The Polish Rabbis once came together in order to sit in judgment over those who had become disloyal to Jewish customs. But before they promulgated the judgment severing the "breakers of the yoke" from the loyal, they decided to ask Rabbi Wolf of Zbaraz, also one of the great lovers, for his assent. "But do I love you any more than I love them?" was his reply. The proceedings were not continued.

"The perfect Zaddik," teaches the Baalshem, "in whom

there is no evil, sees evil in no one." Similarly, the story goes of Rabbi Susya, the great ecstatic and "fool of God," that even when someone committed an evil in his presence he would only see the good side of the man. According to legend he achieved this stage because, on one occasion, when in the presence of his teacher, the Maggid of Mezritch, he attacked a habitual sinner asking how he was not ashamed to confront the holy man, the latter blessed him that he might thereafter see only the good in everyone. According to another account his attitude was to perceive the sins of others as being his own and to reproach himself with them.

For him who is not a perfect Zaddik, the Baalshem expounds the following complementary teaching: "If someone happens to see something sinful or to hear about it, let him mark well that there is in him a minute quantity of that sin and let him set about putting himself right. . . . Then the sinner too will, if you draw him into the same unity with you, since all are One Human Being. Thus do you effect the accomplishment of the saying: 'Forsake the evil and do \* (make) good,' as you are making good out of evil." Here the Jewish religious wisdom coincides, from an entirely different angle, with an ancient Chinese one: whosoever brings himself into unison with the Sense of Being, also brings the world into unison with it; but the hasidic saying states what is lacking in all Taoism: you must draw the next man into the unity, and so exercise on him an influence for good.

What we must beware of is this persistent discrimination between ourselves and our neighbour, the conceit of discrimination, the deception of discrimination—indeed, this entire triumphal world of illusion, based upon a self-

\* The Hebrew verb *asah* has the double meaning of doing and making.

satisfying discrimination. Nothing disturbs the unity of God's work, the foretaste of Eternity, as much as this overbearing discrimination between myself and my neighbour, as if indeed I excelled in one way or another above somebody else. The most extreme manifestation, in the scope of language, ever expounded in Hasidism against this overflow of false differentiation, is what Rabbi Raphael of Bershad said in the last summer before his death: "We must now lay aside all pious deeds, so that there be no more estrangement of the heart from any other Jew."

There is, however, yet another category of people whom we find it particularly hard to love; they are our enemies. This relationship has been described by the saying of another great Zaddik, also one of the first, Rabbi Yehiel-Michal of Zloczov, likewise a short time before his death. He ordered his sons to pray for the well-being of their enemies. "And do you think," he added, "that this is not divine service? It is a service greater than all prayer." Here the integration of the ethical into the religious has reached its climax.

#### IV

Hasidism is one of the great religious movements, which show directly that the human soul can, as a whole, united within itself, live in communication with the wholeness of Being—not only isolated solitary souls, but a community-bound multitude of souls. The realms which have been separated from each other through apparent necessity recognize, in the sublime moments of such movements, the unjustness of their mutual demarkation and merge into one.

The lucid flame of human unity embraces all the forces and ascends to the Unity Divine.

The unification of the ethical and religious domains, as it has been accomplished in so exemplary a manner by Hasidism, if only in short-lived blossom, brings forth what we, in our human world, call Holiness. We can hardly have knowledge of Holiness as human property by any way other than through such unification. It is important to learn to know it.

Many of the "free" can learn from Hasidism that there is such a thing as Holiness; many of the "pious" can learn what it is.

## The Place of Hasidism in the History of Religion

THE DETERMINATION of the place occupied by Hasidism in the history of religion does not aim at revealing the historical associations, the influences which worked upon it, and the influences exercised by it, but at showing which particular species of religion found its historical representation here. We speak of the historical representation of a species of religion, if it is not merely individual thought and experience, but a common movement springing from many generations, and a common way of life developing through many generations. To comprehend the particular species of religion represented by a historical manifestation, we must find out to which historical type this manifestation belongs, and furthermore we must press on to the limits of typology and establish the specific difference. Our method is therefore of necessity a comparative one, but in another sense than that known in comparative science of religion. We may indeed begin in that way, by unearthing in texts and rites themes which are common to them and to the texts and rites of other religious spheres, be they of history or of ethnology and folklore. But for us the bringing to light of such themes is not the aim and end of the investigation, but its starting point. Our task is to show how differently, in the history of religion, different types treat the same

theme, and, to go still further, how differently, within the same type, different manifestations treat the same theme, which meaning the theme has assumed here, and which there. And in this way it is our task to reach a clear determination first of the type and then of the individual historical manifestation. It is not the theme itself that concerns us most, but we wish to know why the theme has been received into a certain order, and what change has been brought about by this reception.

For the critical elucidation of the task I begin with a story, which proves quite clearly how a certain theme may be common to different religious spheres, but which shows us at the same time that the establishment of this common factor by itself signifies no great advance.

The story is told of Rabbi Aaron of Karlin, a favourite disciple of the Maggid of Mesritch, who died young. A fellow disciple, returning home from Mesritch, came about midnight to Karlin, and desired to greet his friend. He at once went to his house, and knocked on the lighted window. "Who are you?" asked a voice from within, and, certain that Rabbi Aaron would recognise his voice, he answered, "I." No reply came, and the door was not opened, although he knocked again and again. At last he cried, "Aaron, why do you not open to me?" Then he heard from within, "Who is it who is so bold to say 'I,' as God alone may do?" He said in his heart, "I have not yet learned my lesson," and returned immediately to the Maggid.

We know this story, and in a fuller version, from the literature of the Sufi sect of Islam, from the first part of the collection of mystic parables "Mesnewi" of the Persian poet, Jalal-ed-din Rumi. There is no mention here of the

name of one of the great Sufis, everything remaining anonymous. A man knocks at his friend's door. The friend asks, "Who is there?" He answers, "I." The friend sends him away. For a full year the grief of separation burns within him, then he comes and knocks again. To his friend's question, "Who is it?" he replies, "Thou." And at once the room is opened to him, wherein is no space for two "I's," that of God (of the "friend") and that of the man.

Doubtless the theme does not originate with Rumi. In the opinion of Massignon and Paul Kraus its source is a saying of the mystic martyr, al-Hallaj, quoted by Solami. There God rejects the faithful one, who answers "It is I," but receives him, when he returns and gives the answer "No, it is thou, my Lord." And in that moment his desire for God becomes God's desire for him.\*

It is indeed possible that the appearance of the theme—in fragmentary form—in Hasidism may be traced back to Sufi influence, perhaps through Turkey in the Sabbatian era. So far as I know it cannot be proved. For us here the question is unimportant. For we have before us an inner connection not between Sufism and Hasidism alone, which would attest a special proximity between them. We find parallels not only in Indian Bhakti mysticism and in the Rhenish monastic mysticism of the Middle Ages, but also in a mystic system, which, unlike them all, bears no theistic stamp, the Chinese Zen-Buddhism, which we shall consider further. There it is told how a monk from another Buddhist sect, following the advice of a Zen monk, absorbs himself in inner contemplation. In the grey morning light he hears a

The sayings set out by Nicholson in his commentary on the "Mesnevi" are less analogous.



flute playing, falls into an ecstasy, runs to the cell of his friend, and knocks on the door. To the question "Who is it?" he replies, "I." Whereupon the other rebukes him, "Why do you get drunk, and snort away the whole night on the street?" The following day he attains the "right attitude," and expresses it in these words, "Now no more do I have an idle dream on my pillow, I let the fluteplayer play whatever tune he wills." In the symbolic language of Zen this means that he no longer opposes the "I" to the Being, but experiences the Unity.

We may regard the theme as one common to mysticism generally, one in which its tendency to eliminate the barrier between I and Thou, in order to experience Unity, has found a pictorial expression. With regard to typology the comparison has not led us beyond the general sphere.

We come far nearer to an understanding of what is peculiar to Hasidism, if we compare some of its legends with legends of Zen, with just that sect, or more correctly with one out of that sect-group within the Mahayana, which held itself far from the theistic elements which had arisen in it. Here it is proved, that in comparing historical manifestations in the realm of mysticism, it is not always good to begin with a central religious content; it may be more fruitful to set out from life itself, from the relationship to concrete reality, and only finally to inquire after the central content, which it is true exercises a definite influence on the realm of the concrete too.

Zen (in Sanskrit *dhyana*, i.e. meditation) is the name of one of the varieties of later Buddhism, which laid hold of China in the sixth and Japan in the twelfth century. Its most important characteristic is that it declines to make any direct

utterance on transcendent matters. According to tradition Buddha himself refused to speak of the realm of the transcendent, and substantiated it by saying that such talk is of no avail in seeking the path of redemption. From this the Zen-school evolved the teaching, that man could not even think of the Absolute as such, let alone express it. In a particularly authoritative writing of the Mahayana, the Lankavatara Sutra, it is said, "Ideas and judgments depend upon each other, they are unable to express the highest reality." This conforms utterly with the saying of Lao-tse, "The Tao, that can be told, is not the eternal Tao." In many formulations of Zen we can see the influence of Taoistic teaching, that truth is above antithetics. All conceptual assertion submits its object to the law of contradiction. It brings it down to the dialectic plane, where it is possible to place an antithesis in opposition to every thesis, and thus absolute truth is transformed into relative truth. Therefore the Zen-school even refuses to recognise the opposition of concepts in classical Buddhism, that between Sansara, the "stream" of incessant being, and Nirvana, the running dry of the stream: in truth both are one. "The highest truth," it says in an early Zen text, "is not difficult, it only spurns choice"; that is, the rational urge to expound either "a" or "non-a" as the truth and not both at once. Hence the Absolute may not be apprehended through anything universal, instead it may be apprehended through the tangible and concrete, through something that we experience. Zen teachers tell the story of how Buddha, when he desired to impart the full teaching, held up a flower, and smiled in silence; only one in the assembled throng, his disciple Kashyapa, understood him and smiled too. The

Zen-school traces its tradition back to Kashyapa, who received the mystery from Buddha. According to this the import of this tradition cannot be to hand down spiritual values in abstract speech. But also all established methods of meditation appear merely as more or less questionable expedients and not as the way to the attainment of truth; indeed some even designate them as a disease. When the pupil asks about the transcendental, the teacher shows him, for example, his staff, as if to oppose the concrete to the universal. Or he raises his finger. Or he breaks forth into the cry, now famous in the history of the school, "Kwats!" Or, if notwithstanding he speaks, he speaks a verse. And sometimes he even strikes the disciple in order to transport him at once into reality, where the mystery, superior to all Yes and No, will be revealed, the mystery that cannot be transmitted except by letting it spring from the heart of the disciple under the influence of the teacher. "Everyone," it is said, "should find the heart of the Buddha in his own heart." Not by turning away from reality, but only by surrendering himself to it, can man achieve salvation. In accordance with this Zen cloisters are not places of contemplation for individuals, but fellowship settlements of land-workers; the work is the foundation of their life. Of the patriarch, who founded this way of life in the eighth century, it is told, that when the monks besought him to tell them the secret truth, he commanded them to go to work in the fields, and after their return (he said) he would speak to them. When they returned, he went to meet them, spread out his arms, and pointed at them. Through the activity of his whole spiritual-corporal being man achieves intimate intercourse with concrete reality, in intimate inter-

course with concrete reality man becomes capable of grasping the truth, and in turn the comprehension of the truth leads to the highest concentration of deed. Hence comes the determining influence exercised by Zen upon the military caste of the Samurai. The sword masters were accustomed, before they went into battle, to come to the great Zen teachers, and to learn from them the highest concentration. There they learned, as one of them says, that "those who cleave to life are dead, and those who defy death live."

I should like now to compare some Hasidic stories with analogous stories of the Zen school.

It is told of Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg, that one of his disciples complained to him that "alien thoughts" were troubling him at prayer. The Rabbi told him to go to another disciple, Rabbi Abraham Haim of Zloczov, at that time an innkeeper, and to spend some time with him. For two weeks the disciple observed the habits of the master of the house. He saw every day how he prayed and how he worked, and remarked nothing unusual in him. It was only in the evening, after all the customers had departed, and in the early morning, before they arrived, that he did not know wherein Rabbi Abraham Haim busied himself. Finally he dared to ask him about it. The latter told him that in the evening he washed all the dishes, and as, in the course of the night, dust settled on them again, he washed them afresh in the morning, and he was particularly careful to see that they did not become rusty. When the disciple returned to Rabbi Shmelke and told him all this, he said, "Now you know what you need to know."

In the writings of Zen we find the theme in a narrower setting. A monk asks the Superior of his monastery, a great

teacher of the ninth century, to reveal to him the secret of the doctrine. The teacher asks, "Have you had your breakfast?" "Yes," he answers. "Then wash the dishes," the teacher says to him. And as he hears this, the disciple receives the inner illumination.

In the Hasidic story the symbolic character of the occurrence is emphasised, whereas in the Zen story it remains concealed, and in the literature the meaning of the saying is discussed; it remains however almost without doubt, that the washing of the dishes is here also a symbol of a spiritual activity. But in spite of the explanation given in the Hasidic story, it would be wrong to understand the doings as purely symbolic. It is really meant that a man should do whatever he has to do (as here the washing of dishes) with complete concentration, with the gathering together of all his being, with full intent, and without turning one's eyes from anything.

After the death of Rabbi Moses of Kobryn the Rabbi of Kotzk asked a disciple of the deceased, what had been the most important thing for his master. He answered, "Always what he was engaged in at the moment." And the Abbot of a Zen monastery is asked, "One of the first patriarchs has said, 'There is a word, which, when understood, wipes out the sins of innumerable aeons'. What is this word?" He answers, "Right under your nose!" The disciple asks again, "What does that mean?" "This is all I can say," replies the teacher.

Both answers, the hasidic and the Zenic, are almost alike: the key to the truth is the next deed, and this key opens the door, if the deed is so done, that the meaning of the act finds its fulfilment here.

The teacher therefore is the man who does whatever he does adequately, and the core of his teaching is this that he allows the disciple to take part in his life and so grasp the secret of the doing. Rabbi Mendel of Rymanow used to say that he learned the Torah from every limb of his teacher, Rabbi Elimelekh. The same thing, only from the other side, is said by the Zen teacher. When a disciple, who is serving him, complains that he has not yet initiated him into the wisdom of the spirit, he answers, "From the day of your coming I have not ceased to instruct you in the wisdom of the spirit." "In what way, master?" asks the disciple, and the teacher explains to him, "When you brought me a cup of tea, did I not accept it? When you bowed before me, did I not respond to your greeting?" The disciple kept his head hanging, and now the teacher explains further, "If you want to see, look straight into the object; but if you try to brood over it, you have already missed it."

Hence truth in the world of men is not to be found contained in a piece of knowledge but only as human existence. Man does not reflect upon it, he does not declare it, he does not perceive it, but he lives it, and receives it as life. In Zen and in Hasidism this is expressed in almost the same language. The "Song on experiencing the truth" of a Zen teacher about the year 700 begins with the verse, "Have you never seen a man, who is truth itself?" And Hasidism says just the same thing, when it applies the word of David "And this is the teaching of man" to the man who has become a complete teaching in himself. In almost the same language here and there the holiest teaching is rejected, if it is found in someone only as a content of his thinking. According to the Hasidic view it is dangerous "to know

too much Hasiduth," because one can come to know more than one performs, and one of the Zen teachers reproaches his disciples with this failing, that he "has too much Zen"; "If Zen is spoken about," he says, "I am filled with disgust."

Here and there silence is held in honour. And here and there it is not intended to refrain from all expression, but only to renounce all abstract observations on that which is not given to abstraction. Here and there singing takes place, here and there folk themes are introduced in song and transformed into mystical ones. The Zen monk paints too, and his importance in the development of East-Asiatic art is great. The Hasid cannot paint, but he dances. All this, song, painting, and dance, means expression, and is understood as expression. Silence is not the last. "Learn to keep silence, so that you may know how to speak," says a Zaddik, and one of the Zen teachers says, "Talk is abuse, but silence is deceit. Beyond talk and silence there is a steep passage." One other feature must be added however, which is common to Zen and Hasidism, and very characteristic of both. Sometimes with different variations profane conversation is engaged in by the masters of the mystery, conversation which deceives the outside listener by its apparent complete superficiality, yet which in truth is important word by word and full of hidden meaning.

Both in Zen and in Hasidism the relationship between teacher and disciple is central. Just as there is no other people in which the corporeal bond of generations has achieved such significance, as in China and Israel, I know of no other religious movement which has to such an extent as Zen and Hasidism connected its view of the spirit with

the idea of spiritual propagation. In both, paradoxically man reveres human truth, not in the form of a possession, but in the form of a movement, not as a fire that burns upon the hearth, but, speaking in the language of our time, like the electric spark, which is kindled by contact. Here and there the main concern of the legend is what passes between teacher and disciple. In Zen indeed this is almost the only concern, whereas in Hasidism, which does not present itself in brotherhoods of isolated individuals, the community plays a great part; of course it too is to a certain extent made up of potential disciples, of occasional disciples, of men who ask questions, seek explanation, listen, and from time to time learn something they had not intended to learn.

But this is also the point at which the ways most obviously part. I should again like to quote a typical story from both movements.

To a Zen teacher of the tenth century there comes a youth from a distant land. The teacher closes the door in front of him. The youth knocks, and is questioned about himself and his desires. "I am able," he says, "to contemplate the foundation of my existence, and I desire to receive instruction." The teacher opens the door, looks at the visitor, and closes it again in his face. After some time the youth returns, and the performance is repeated. The third time the visitor pushes inside, the teacher seizes him by the chest, and cries, "Speak." As the youth hesitates, he rebukes him, "You blockhead," and thrusts him out. The door turns on its hinge, and one foot of the disciple is caught in it and breaks. He cries out, and in that very moment he receives the inner illumination. Later he founded his own school.



In Hasidism we hear also of the "severe" method, namely in relation to the sinner, who desires to repent. But here it is unknown in the relationship between the teacher and the questioning disciple. Characteristic of this relationship is the following incident. One of the disciples of Rabbi Bunam of Pshysha, Rabbi Enoch, tells how he longed for a whole year to enter his teacher's house and to talk with him. But every time he approached the house he could not summon up enough courage. Once as he walked around the field weeping, the desire came upon him with unusual strength, and compelled him to run at once to the Rabbi. The latter asked him, "Why are you weeping?" Enoch answered, "Am I not a creature in the world, and am I not made with eyes and heart and all limbs, and yet I do not know, for what purpose I was created, and what good I am in the world." "Fool," said Rabbi Bunam, "I also go around thus. This evening you will eat with me."

It would be wrong to think that the distinction here is essentially a psychological one, perhaps the distinction between pride and humility—in Hasidism humility is counted one of the chief virtues, whereas in Zen it is not mentioned. The decisive distinction is of another kind. I will elucidate this by showing how here and there a widespread theme is at work, which we find first in an old Egyptian tale, afterwards retold by Herodotus, and which reappears in much folk-literature. It is the theme of the master thief. It is told of a Hasid of the Maggid of Kosnitz, that following the latter's advice he became a master thief, and yet remained an upright man; the story tells of his cunning and his success. But the Hasidic tradition goes still further. From the

mouth of some Zaddikim we hear jesting words, in which they take as a pattern for the service of God the bold thief, who puts his whole life into his undertakings, and when at first he doesn't succeed tries and tries again. The enterprise of the great thief appears here as the symbol of concentration in the service of God. It is worth noting here, that the thief and the sucking child are put side by side: from these two beings, the immoral and the amoral, the highest qualification, inner Unity, is to be learned. A completely different symbolism of the thief motif is found in Zen. A teacher at the end of the eleventh century tells in his sermon of an old master thief, who undertakes to instruct his son in his art at the latter's request. He goes with him at night to the house of a rich man, together with him breaks into the house, and orders him to climb into a large chest and to hide the most valuable objects in it. As the son crouches down in the chest, the father pushes down the lid, bolts it, goes out of the room, alarms the inhabitants of the house, and goes away. The son has to conjure up all his wits to save himself. Finally he appears in a fury before his father. The latter listens calmly to the whole story, and then says, "You have now learned the art." So is the Zen teacher with his disciples. He makes nothing easy, he never intervenes, he forces them to venture their life, and thus achieve for themselves what one can only achieve for oneself. We have seen how truth, both in Hasidism and in Zen, appears not as content and property, but as human existence and as movement between the generations; this movement however from existence to existence signifies in Hasidism transmission, in Zen stimulation.

But this distinction penetrates deep, beyond the realm of

the pedagogical, of the relationship between the generations.

In a book ascribed to the first patriarch of Zen, Bodhidharma, we read, "If you wish to seek the Buddha, look into your own nature; for this nature is the Buddha himself." The message, which he brought to China when he came there from the West about the year 520, is contained in these verses: "Special transmission beyond the writings, no cleaving to words and letters, direct pointing at the soul of man, seeing into one's own nature, and the attainment of Buddhahood." The meaning does not imply that the individual has only to care for his own salvation. In the fourfold vows that are repeated three times after each lecture of the Zen teacher the last verse runs thus: "Inaccessible is the Buddha's path, I vow to attain it," but the first verse says, "Innumerable are the sentient beings,—I vow to save them all." And this salvation means again helping everyman to see into his own nature. If the song of a later Zen teacher, a contemporary of the Baal-shem-tov, ends with the words, "This very earth is the pure land of the lotus, and this body here is the body of the Buddha," then, to be sure, the first of the two verses points out the importance of intercourse with the concrete reality of things, but the actual path to the Absolute is only seen in the relationship of the man to himself. The historical Buddha, who has become in the Mahayana a divine being coming down to earth, is here entirely pushed aside by this Buddha-nature which dwells in all souls, and which every man is able to discover and to realise within himself. Even the name of Buddha is sometimes forbidden here, because it diverts men from their personal task to historical remembrance—in contrast to

other Mahayana sects, which regard innumerable repetitions of the Buddha's name as a path to salvation. "Whoever utters the name of Buddha," it says in a Zen writing, "should cleanse his mouth." In pictures by painters of the Zen school we see how Bodhidharma tears up the holy writings and hurls them away from him. Another patriarch heats his oven with a wooden picture of Buddha. There are even scruples against the imagining of Buddha. The conception of Buddha is qualified as a chain forged by spiritual goldsmiths. "We," it says further, "do not wear it." Zen is a religious manifestation, which has detached itself from its historical antecedents. Buddhism, originally a historical religion, which in Mahayana even transformed itself into a religion of revelation, here becomes a mysticism of the human person, a mysticism outside history, no longer bound by any single event.

It is quite different with Hasidism. However much the Kabbalistic doctrine of emanation altered the idea of the relationship between God and the *world*, the idea of the relationship between God and the *human soul* has remained essentially as it was. We may hear again and again in Hasidism, that God is the substance of our prayer, but we do not hear that He is our substance. The power of God prepares our throat to speak the unsullied prayer, but the mouth that speaks is not divine. The elemental dialogue has not become a monologue, the dialogue between God and man has not become a conversation of the man with his soul, and it could not become this, because here from time immemorial all existence of belief depended on the essential likeness of the divine leader and the host led by him depended on an essential likeness, which could not be changed

into an essential identity, without raising doubt as to the absolute superiority of this leadership. From here all fundamentals trace their descent: the image of God, walking in His ways, the divine regime of the people. It is true, mysticism here allows the soul of the individual, who separates himself from society, to feel the presence of God in burning intimacy, but even in the ecstasy the situation remains as it was, even the relationship of the most intimate reciprocity remains a relationship, unshaken is the relation to a being, which cannot be identified with our being. Even the ecstasy is unable to turn inwards to such an extent as to be able to find complete satisfaction and fulfilment in inwardness. More than this, the isolation of the individual from society cannot in the realm of religion be realised to such an extent that mysticism could free itself from history. Even the most personal mysticism reposes here in the shade of historical revelation. Never, in the eyes of the soul, has this God become to such an extent its God, the God of the soul, that He would cease to be the God of Sinai. And indeed the true Zaddik is a Torah, but he is so just because the Torah has become embodied in him. In that interpretation of the words "And that is the teaching of man," which I have mentioned, it says, "If man hallows all his members, and cleaves to the Torah, spirit to spirit, then he becomes himself a complete Torah." Personal teaching too arises from union with historical teaching. In Israel all religion is history, including mystical religion.

Here again an example may be cited. In Zen, and even more clearly before it in Taoism, which as we have said influenced it greatly, we find it asked from time to time, whether we are not dreaming that we are alive. Chuang Tse,

the great Taoistic poet and teacher, asks himself, after he had dreamed that he was a butterfly, "Now I do not know: was I a man, dreaming that he is a butterfly, or am I now a butterfly, dreaming that he is a man?" An answer is not given here; in Zen such questions are answered by a stroke, which may be translated by the cry, "Wake up!" Not so Hasidism. A Zaddik is asked by his son, "If there are dead men walking about in the World of Delusion, who imagine that they are pursuing their customary life, perhaps I also still live in the World of Delusion?" The father answers him, "If a man knows that there is a World of Delusion, then it is a sign to him that he does not live in the World of Delusion." A yet more characteristic answer however comes from another Zaddik, belonging to a generation close to our own. It is given to a disciple, who asked how we may know that we are not living in the World of Delusion. The answer runs, "If a man in the house of prayer is called upon to take part in the reading of the Torah from the desk, then it is a sign to him that he does not live in the World of Delusion." The Torah is the measure of reality.

After the establishment of this fundamental distinction, we must consider afresh what seemed to us most clearly to be common to Zen and Hasidism, the positive relationship to the concrete. We have seen that in both the man in process of learning and becoming was directed to things, to sensible being, to activity in the world. But the motive force in each is fundamentally different. In Zen the intensive direction towards the concrete serves to divert the spirit intent on the perception of the transcendent from discursive thought. The direction is, although aimed against the usual dialectics, itself of a dialectic nature; it is not the things themselves

that are concerned here, but their un-notional character as symbol of the Absolute, which is above all notion. Not so in Hasidism. Here the things themselves are the object of religious concern, for they are the abode of the holy sparks, which man shall raise up. The things here are important not as presentations of the un-notional truth, but each of them as an exile of divine Being. By dealing aright with them, man meets the fate of divine Being in the world, and helps in the redemption. His activity with things is not like the activity of the Zen monk, something that only accompanies the seeing into his own nature, but it is permeated with independent religious meaning. The realism of Zen is dialectic, it means annulment; the Hasidic realism is messianic, it means fulfilment. Just as, linked with revelation, it heeds the past, so, linked with redemption, it heeds the future—both in contrast to Zen, for which absolute reality is only accorded to the *moment*, as this is the possibility of inner illumination, and before the moment the dimension of time disappears. Hasidism is, so far as I see, the only mysticism in which *time* is hallowed.

Of all manifestations in the history of religion Hasidism is that in which quite clearly two lines meet, lines which it is generally assumed cannot meet because of their nature: the line of inner illumination and the line of revelation, that of the moment beyond time and that of historical time. Hasidism explodes the easy view of mysticism. Belief and mysticism are not two worlds, although ever and again in them the tendency to become two independent worlds wins the upper hand. Mysticism is the realm on the borderland of belief, the realm in which the soul takes breath between word and word.





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## GLOSSARY

**Adam Kadmon**, ancient man, primitive man.

**Am ha-aretz**, peasant, ignoramus.

**Etrog**, citron used in the ritual during the festival of tabernacles.

**Hasid**, pious, kind, righteous.

**Kavanah** (pl. *kavanoth*), meaningful prayers delivered with devotion and concentration.

**Klipah** (pl. *klipoth*), shell.

**Lamdan**, a scholar.

**Maggid**, a homiletic preacher.

**Minhah**, afternoon prayer.

**Mizvah** (pl. *mizvoth*), commendment, precept.

**Nabi**, prophet.

**Ruach**, spirit, breath.

**Shekhina**, Divine Presence, Holy Spirit.

**Sephirah** (pl. *sephiroth*), emanation, sphere.

**Staretz**, elder.

**Zaddik**, just, righteous, honest.

**Zimzum**, humming, buzzing.